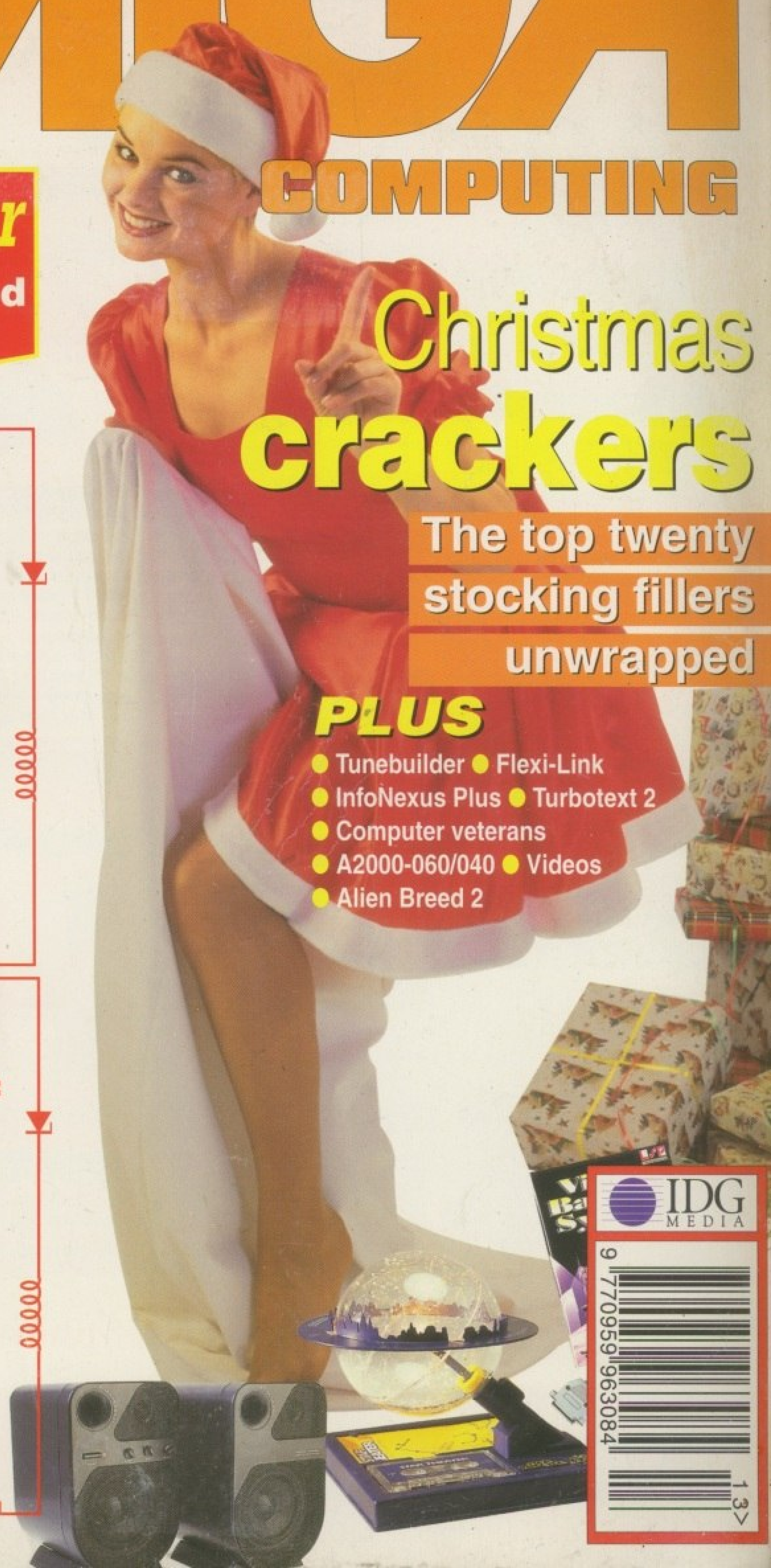
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AMIGA COMPUTING

Image Engineer
Stunning fully featured image processor



Christmas crackers
The top twenty stocking fillers unwrapped

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- Flexi-Link
- InfoNexus Plus
- Turbotext 2
- Computer veterans
- A2000-060/040
- Videos
- Alien Breed 2

Christmas 1995 — AMIGA COMPUTING

Requires at least 020 WB2 2Mb RAM

Hard Drive Required for both disks

Image Engineer



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---

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IDG MEDIA

9 770959 963084 13

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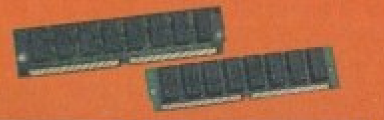
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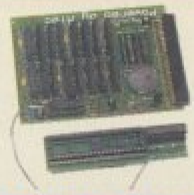
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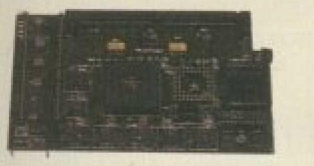


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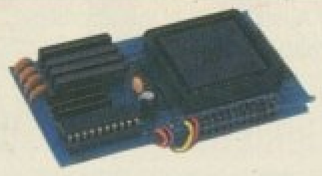


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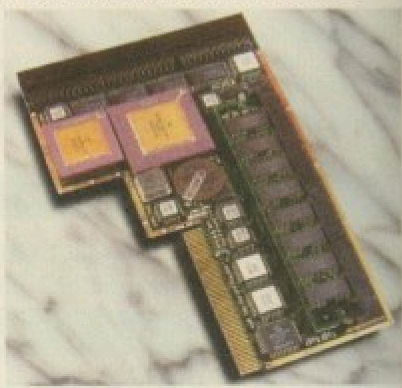
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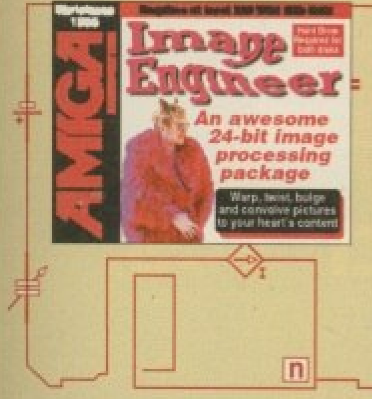
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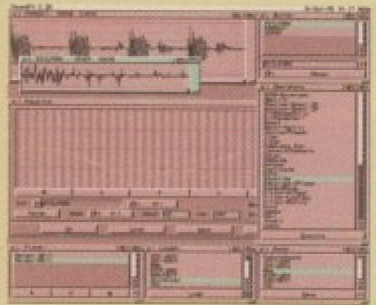
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Twenty of the best presents you can buy for your Amiga, all costing £60 or less



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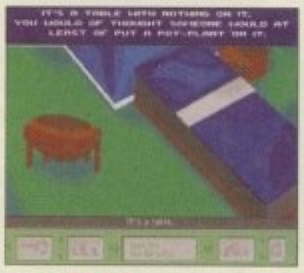
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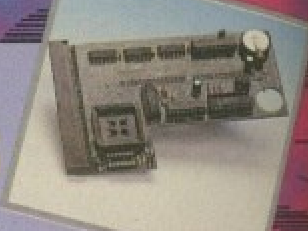
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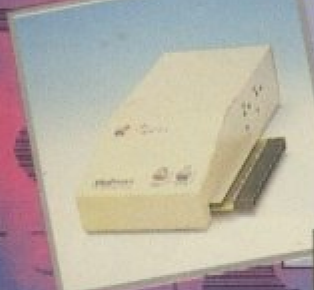
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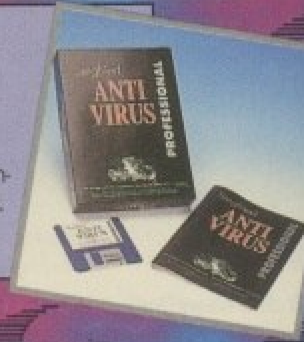
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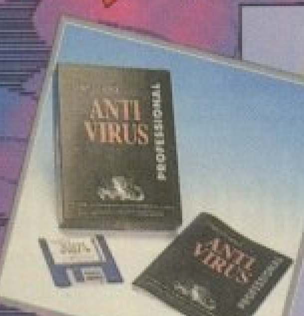
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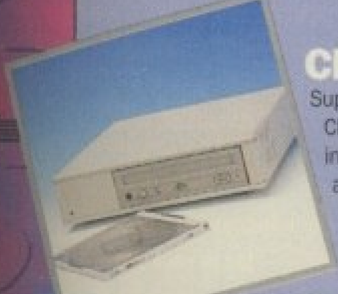
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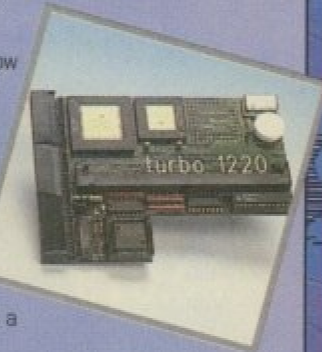
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Payback time

The almost farcical fall and rise of the Amiga has to be one of the strangest episodes in computing history. Claims, counter claims, rumours and an eventual buy-out, spread over a whole year with not a single machine made or sold.

And yet the fanatical user base remained loyal to the cause. At last, the basic A1200 is back in business, as indeed are the majority of the UK management team who headed-up Commodore UK – which incidentally was one of the few profit making outposts in the empire prior to the collapse.

At last some good news for the users and even better news for the Commodore old boys. But what's happened to Escom's plans for an Amiga renaissance, as revealed to the world at their Frankfurt press launch of the all new Amiga Technologies division.

Like many others, I sat back and listened as the Escom hierarchy detailed their glorious vision designed to put their latest acquisition back in its proper place. The driving force in the revival was to be a pricing policy which effectively halved the price of the entire range. Although the men at the top were careful not to quote a solid price per unit, they did reveal the number of units to be produced, projected overall costs, and the profit margin built into the business plan.

Given all of the above, it doesn't require a genius to figure out a fairly accurate retail price. Do your sums and contrast that with the real-world asking price and you soon figure out someone at Escom needs a new calculator.

The driving force in the revival was to be a pricing policy which effectively halved the price of the entire range

Since that glorious day, Amiga Technologies have been keen to forget these initial forecasts, while third parties are even denying what was ever said – which is quite ironic considering those who are re-telling the story didn't actually attend.

But let's be realistic. The press conference was exactly that – a PR stunt designed to divert some much needed attention to their latest investment. Fine. However, the renaissance is now well under way, so isn't it time would-be investors and long time enthusiasts alike were given a little more than vague promises.

Given that the planned pricing policy was no more than a temporary rush of blood to the head, what's happened to the other keys to success in the Escom vision. Where's the promised redesign, come to that, where's the all new A4000 it was to be emblazoned across.

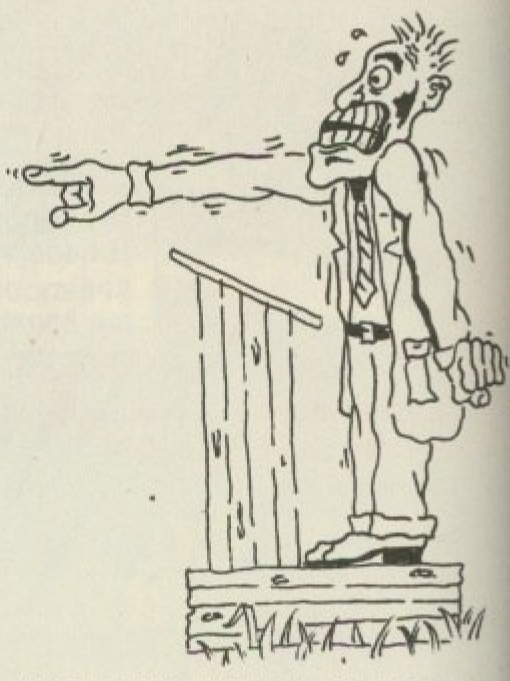
The world did not stop revolving with the premature demise of the Amiga. PCs and Macs continued to get cheaper, quicker and prettier. Admittedly, the Amiga still blows both platforms away when it comes to a straight price and performance combo, but what are Escom/Amiga Technologies doing to promote the virtues of their machines.

The men at the top may well point to *Amiga Computing* and others to wave the flag on their behalf. No problem, we've done exactly that for the duration. However, Joe Schmoe needs to be convinced the Amiga is back for good – and that's something that can only be achieved with real-world promotion and an obvious investment in the cause.

The latest rumours involve a £850,000 Escom Christmas TV advertising campaign. It remains to be seen if any of the alleged cash is to be spent on the Amiga, or is it simply promoting the existing multimedia PC range.

It has to be said that Amiga Technologies certainly aren't alone in taking the Amiga community for granted. NewTek are a prime example of a company who've made millions courtesy of the machine and have now seemingly forgotten the platform completely. Obviously, launching LightWave on the PC and just about every other computing platform known to man is going to put pressure on any company. Having said that, an occasional thought for their bread and butter business surely can't be too much to expect.

Nobody is asking for a handout here. To get the Amiga back on a firm footing, potential buyers and investors need reassurance. Amiga Technologies promised various follow-up events designed to keep people up to date with their progress and future plans. Needless to say, a vague promise is as far as it got.



The same is true for NewTek. Way back in our May issue, *Amiga Computing* scooped an exclusive preview of LightWave 4 and promised a full review would appear soon after. That was eight months ago and I'm still none the wiser as to when the promised review will appear.

Come on guys, is it really that difficult to put the odd realistic press release together. That's literally all it takes – magazines like this one will happily do the rest. Amiga users aren't going to sell-up at the first sign of adversity, that's already been proven. What's likely to kill the Amiga off faster than anything else is a lack of communication and confidence in the men and women who make it, and the products that help to make it special.

Paul Austin
Editor

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Tel: 01625 878888, Fax: 01625 850652

EMail contacts:
Editorial edit@acomp.demon.co.uk
Advertising ads@acomp.demon.co.uk

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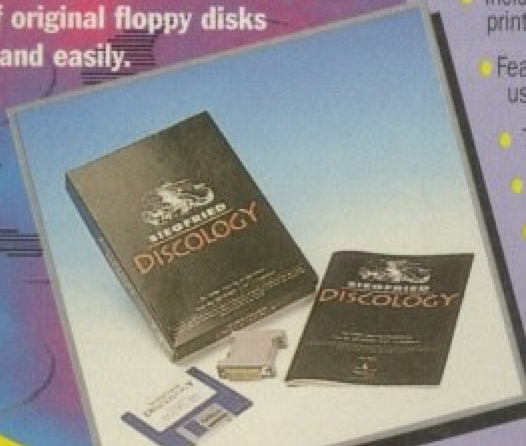
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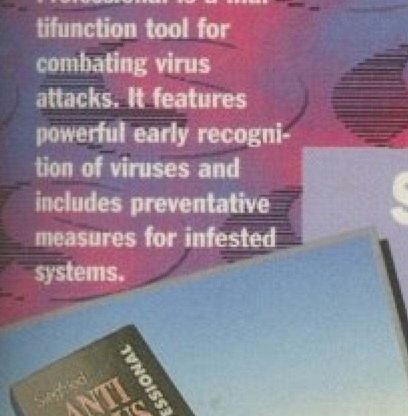
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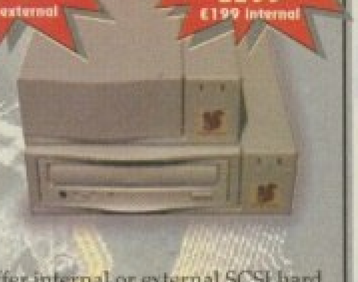
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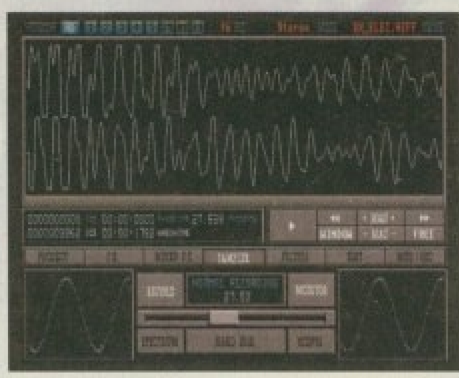


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Newly released, Disk Magic (screenshot on the left), is the ultimate file and disk management utility for your Amiga. DiskMAGIC makes every task you perform - from the copying of a file, to the extraction of an archived file, as simple as a clicking on a button! In fact, after using DiskMAGIC, you'll wonder how you ever used you Amiga without it!

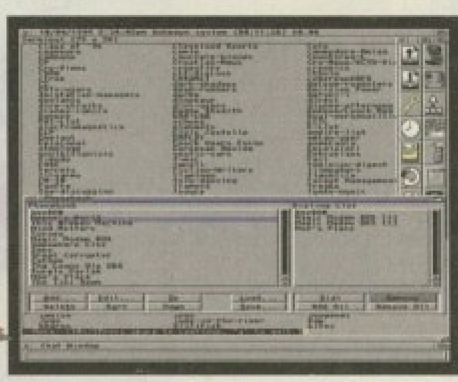
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NEWS

By Gareth Lofthouse and Tina Hackett

SDL fight through crisis

SDL, the largest distributor of hardware to the traditional computer retailer, is battling for survival having been forced by cash flow problems to apply for an Administration Order. Contrary to a report in VNU's PC Dealer, however, the company has not gone into receivership.

The fortunes of the company over the next few months are of particular significance to Amiga enthusiasts, since SDL was recently chosen by Amiga Technologies to distribute the new A1200s and 4000Ts to retail.

As was the case with ZCL earlier in the year, SDL's financial troubles arise from cash flow problems caused by the collapse of Commodore International. Attempts to make up for the 18 month absence of the Amiga by moving into other markets have also been hampered by the erratic supply of PCs from companies like IBM and Compaq, according to Marketing Controller John Arundel.

Following the grant of an Administrative Order by the High Court on 13 October 1995, SDL is now protected for a minimum of three months against any action by creditors to bring the company down. This means that for the time being, the company's £8 million debts have been frozen. During this period the Administrator, David Nisbet, will attempt to keep the company trading and making profit for the creditors. As SDL were keen to point out, the firm's situation differs from ZCL in that it has *not* been put into administrative receivership, which usually leads to liquidation. At present, the major creditors are still supporting SDL.

John Smith, General Manager of Amiga Technologies UK, hopes that SDL will survive



The crisis also puts the future of SDL's Silica retail stores into question. David Nisbet has already said that the chain is not very profitable and that it will need close monitoring.

Asked how SDL's fortunes would affect the Amiga, John Smith, General Manager of Amiga Technologies UK said: "Obviously [SDL's] survival is very important. They've been good ambassadors for Commodore products over the years and we hope they'll continue." Along with Leisuresoft, SDL are the only distributor for new Amiga products, and of the two it has far more experience in the Amiga market. If the worst comes to the worst and SDL disappears, Amiga Technologies would be forced to look to alternatives. "Don't forget," John Smith added, "we have Leisuresoft, so while I want SDL to survive we do already have an alternative distributor."

It appears that SDL have yet to receive the Amiga bundles that could help revive fortunes because of supply problems Amiga Technology have been experiencing. However, John Smith expects the Solectron factory in Bordeaux to be up to full capacity by the second week of November at the latest.

"We have been having discussions with the administrator and you will start to see products at the beginning of next week coming back into SDL" he told *Amiga Computing*.

Ragin' Gaijin

Although Gaijin press are better known for their Manga creations on paper than video, founder Josh Clark has embarked upon an ambitious new project in which he intends to make full use of Amiga hardware and software. The plan is to make a motion picture of his comic book title, Ariel: High School Devil-Girl. Enlisting help from companies such as Alternative Image and Magic Camera Company, it is hoped the project will be yet another animation coup for the Amiga.

Clark explained why he has chosen the Amiga to work on: "The Amiga is the best machine for the job. It's cheap and easy to use." He intends to use packages such as Imagine, Real 3D and Cinema 4D and hopes this will allow him to create cartoon-style graphics as close to the Japanese standards as possible.

He went on to explain: "We're trying to make a pipe dream into a reality and show that if your heart's in it then anyone can do it. It's a case of The Amateur Strikes Back if you like!"

The film is currently only in the planning stages, although it is hoped development will commence in February.

UK gets Pawed

After months of speculation, the world's first portable Amiga is ready to go on sale. Blittersoft have recently agreed exclusive distribution rights for Silent Paw Production's products, and the Portable Amiga Work Station will be on sale in the UK this November.

Developed by US company Silent Paw Productions, the first versions to go on sale will be the PAWS 600 and 1200. Versions based on the A3000 and A4000 will follow, although they will differ in that they do not have the ability to use battery power.

Blittersoft are convinced there will be a market for laptop Amigas, although it will obviously be a niche. "A lot of people are using portable PC notebooks for things like CIX and e-mail," Blittersoft's Paul Lesurf said. "But they say they'd rather be using Amigas."

As far as the PAWS 3000 and 4000s are concerned, the company expects high demand for the products from people who want portable Video Toasters. "It's a niche market," Lesurf admitted. "It's too expensive for everyone, but certainly there is a market."

Amiga yo-yos

The Amiga is going to be sold in the Escom shops, John Smith told us at the time of going to print. We realise by now that we're beginning to look stupid saying in one issue it isn't, then in the next that it is, but it's not our fault. Amiga Technologies just keep changing their minds.

The latest report from John Smith says that the Amiga will be on sale in 200 Escom shops by mid-November. Here at *Amiga Computing*, we'll believe it when we see it.

News briefs

Development push from Digita

Digita, far from resting on their laurels after placing four products into the Amiga Magic Pack, have announced a busy release schedule for the rest of the year and early 1996.

First off, there's Datastore 2, Organiser 2, and Money Matters 4 which should be ready for November, each of which will retail at £49.99. Wordprocessor Wordworth 5 is then due for release in January 1996 at £79.99.

Digita's commitment to Amiga development in the long term is further confirmed by plans to release Personal Paint 7, TurboCalc 4 and Wordworth 5SE in Spring 1996. For more details contact Liz Haynes on 01395 270273.

Amiga Star journalist jumps ship

In what will be the most shocking blow to the Amiga industry yet, IDG Media announced it was taking top Amiga journalist Gareth Lofthouse off *Amiga Computing* magazine. He will now be working for the newly launched Internet culture magazine, *The Web*.

A day after hearing the news, colleagues were still clearly distraught. Deputy Editor Ben Vost said: "It is a great loss... another nail in the coffin" when he heard about the death of Red Rum, while others were too hysterical to comment.

Tina Hackett will be taking over the job of News Editor. She wished Mr Lighthouse the best of luck, but stated: "It will be hard to reach the heights of professionalism Gerald attained. I'll obviously be doing my best, but not everyone can drag stuff out like that."

Tina can be contacted at the *Amiga Computing* News Desk: Tel: 01625 878888, Fax: 01625 850652, e-mail tina@acomp.demon.co.uk

Oops overdo

A bit of a misprint in our review of Tunebuilder in the November issue made the price of the broadcast version look extortionate. It should have read $1,899 rather than a horrific $18,999, so apologies are due to Airworks Media.

Microvitec raise European standard

The city of Bradford in Yorkshire is hardly renowned as a place synonymous with new technology, but all that could be set to change. Bradford is the home of Microvitec Displays, a company respected for their high quality monitors, and following a recent deal with Amiga Technologies worth £20 million, they are about to put their name well and truly on the European map.



The Microvitec factory in Bradford has been chosen to produce the official Amiga monitors

Amiga Technologies have made a partnership with the firm which allows Microvitec to produce the official line of monitors for the Amiga. It marks the beginning of a long-term deal which means the largest order ever for Microvitec from any customer. To celebrate, the company held a high profile champagne reception to mark the first Amiga monitor coming off the production lines. Among the local dignitaries, key figures of Amiga Technologies also attended. The monitor, called the M1438S, includes amplified stereo speakers and a special Amiga-compatible video plug.

The emphasis was on generating a European union with all parts being developed in Europe. Microvitec Display's Managing Director, Tony Sampson stressed this: "This agreement is proof that European electronics manufacturers can mount a successful challenge to Far Eastern competitors and Amiga's choice of Solectron, a French company, to manufacture the Amiga 1200 computer is further vindication that European companies are capable of producing quality products for worldwide markets."

Petro Tyschtschenko, president of Amiga Technologies GmbH was invited to speak, and he revealed the partnership's plans for new products next year. "For the first quarter, we will continue with the 14 inch model," he said. "But for the CEBIT fair in Hannover, we have a 15 and 17 inch model on schedule. Our goal is also to replace the 14 inch by the 15 inch model as soon as possible, during the second quarter, and this without increasing the price."

He cites the 17 inch as a breakthrough in the Amiga market because the monitor is able to adapt automatically to horizontal frequencies from 15 up to 64 KHz. It can also be used on high-end Amigas fitted with 64-bit graphic boards and will display video as well as high resolution VGA screens.

The general mood of the conference was positive, with Amiga Technologies president looking confidently into the future. "For the coming year, I will not make any commitments but if everything keeps going as well as this year, we expect to ship 500,000 Amiga 1200 and 50,000 Amiga 4000T. There will be new models available in the entry-level as well as in the mid-range." Plans are also in the pipeline to present their new A1200 CD-ROM drive at the Amiga fair in Cologne.

Other members of Amiga Technologies were on hand to answer questions and they revealed that the choice of RISC chip for the next generation Amigas will be announced at the Video Toaster Expo Show. At their Cologne show, also in November, they will announce in-depth development plans for the future of the Amiga range.

John Smith, General Manager UK, told *Amiga Computing* that he was pleased with the reaction from retail, although Managing Director, Jonathan Anderson, expressed unhappiness with supply difficulties. Gilles Bourdin confirmed an Internet package is in development and mentioned that they are currently seeking a modem to go in the deal.

More details on the latest Amiga shows and developments will follow.

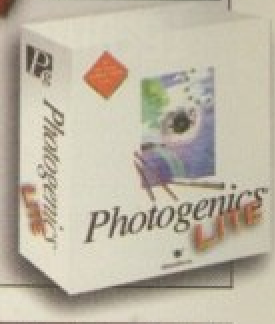


The partnership between Microvitec and Amiga Technologies was celebrated with a champagne reception which marked the first Amiga monitor off the production lines

THE WORLD's FASTEST AMIGAS ARE ON THIS PAGE!

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Figures shown are in MIPS and taken from comparative performance tests using SysInfo standards (1230-IV, 1260, 2060 and Cyberstorm ratings use 60 Nanosecond SIMMs).

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[1]*Available 1st Quarter '96*

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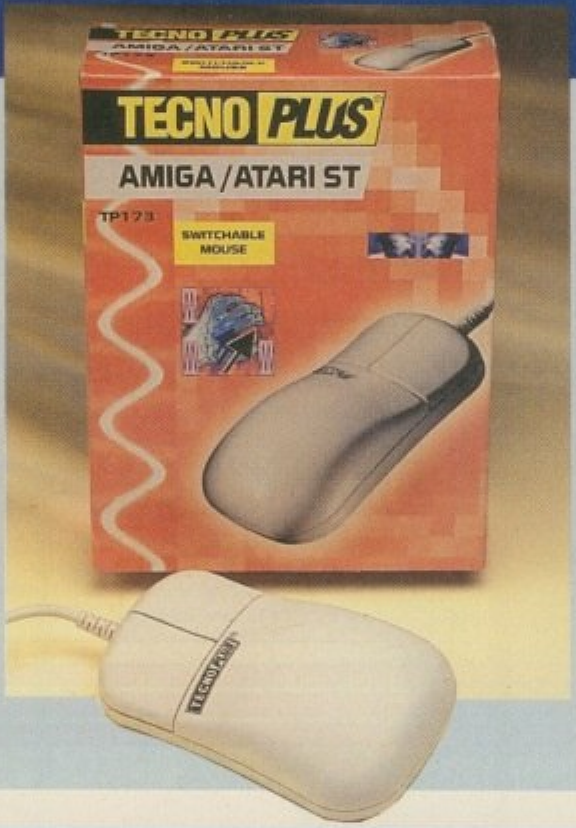
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Techno mouse

Leisuresoft may be distributing the Amiga, but their contribution to development is still pretty small. Supposedly to 'celebrate' the relaunch of the Amiga, Leisuresoft's subsidiary Technoplus have released a new mouse.

It differs from other versions available for the Amiga in that its contoured lines and carefully moulded shape have been developed for both short and extended periods of use.

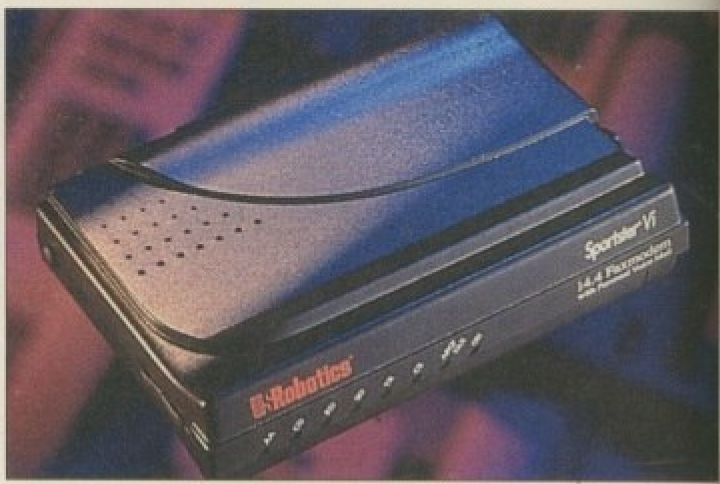
The mouse cost £14.99 and will be available from most leading Computer stores.



Tecnoplus have a new mouse out, priced at £14.99

Comms on the cheap

Highly regarded modem manufacturer US Robotics have released a new entry level Sporster at under £100. It may be slower than more expensive models, but many will welcome the abandonment of the controversial styling the other Sporsters have featured.



The Sportster VI voice modem from US Robotics will be available for £99

Pleasance pays tribute

David Pleasance, formerly Managing Director of Commodore UK before the Escom takeover, is set to make a comeback with a new company called Tangent and an album created with and dedicated to the Amiga.

Named 'Everybody's Girlfriend,' the 14 track CD is due for release in early December and will feature songs written by Pleasance himself. The CD takes its name from the word Amiga which in Spanish means girlfriend.

"The music is very diverse," he told *Amiga Computing*. In addition to blues, ballads, fusion and pop, Pleasance himself will be playing a flamenco guitar track. "All the tracks are inspired by the Amiga in one way or the other," he explained. "A song called 'I don't want to lose you' says it all, I think." The Amiga has been used for all the midi, composing and sequencing on the album.

Asked if he thought there'd be much demand for the album, he replied: "It's not just Amiga created music, it's a celebration of ten years of the Amiga. We're banking on the fact that the Amiga has a cult following."

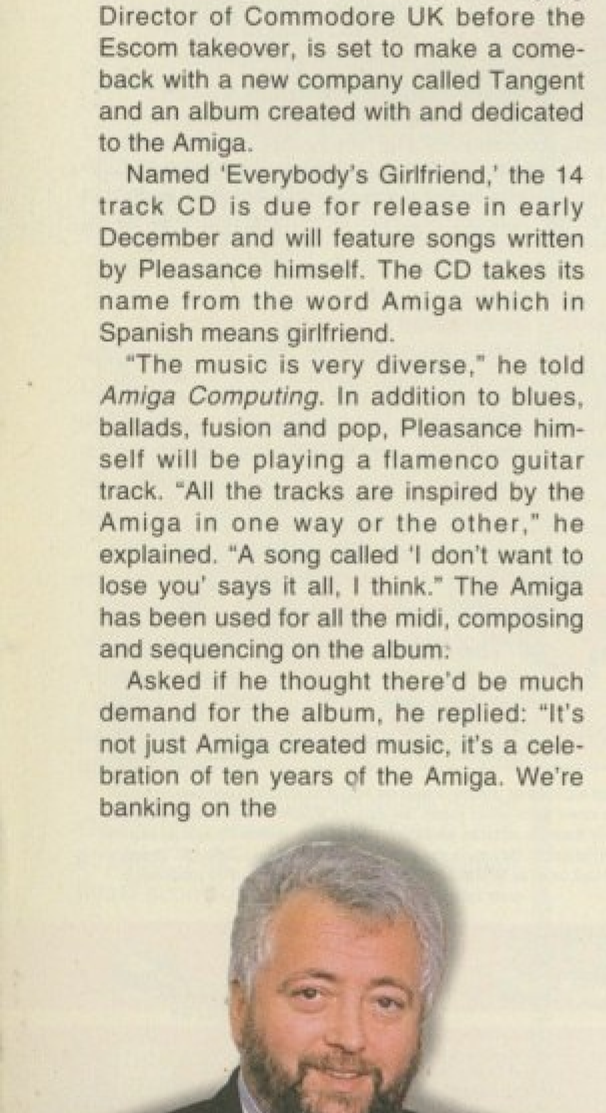
Pleasance already has a successful background in music, one of the high points of which was coming second in the Australian Opportunity Knocks. Tangent Music Design is now based in a 'state of the art' 32 channel, 24 track recording studio.

It looks like Pleasance's long time business involvement with the Amiga might be coming to an end, however, after the album is completed. Tangent will continue to make music for games companies, but so far their are no further Amiga plans. "That's not where the growth is at the moment," he commented.

Until the buyout in May earlier this year, David Pleasance and Colin Proudfoot had been heading Commodore UK in a bid to take over the Commodore legacy. Escom did not buy the UK operation after Pleasance's team pulled out of the running at the last minute. We asked David Pleasance what he thought of Escom's performance so far.

"It's obvious that Jonathan and the other guys are working under very, very difficult circumstances at the moment," he said. "Escom have bought this thing and they're really doing it on the cheap. They're not investing in anything at all, which is why they didn't buy the UK business and they wouldn't meet Colin [Proudfoot] and I on our terms."

"I think their plan is to capitalise on the demand for the product until Christmas, then have a review of the situation and then decide whether they want to invest any further," he continued. "Frankly if they don't invest then I think they're heading for a fall."



Davin Pleasance – releasing a CD paying tribute to the Amiga

CD price slides

The price of CD-ROM drives continues to fall with the announcement of a £119 quad-speed unit due for release from Samsung. The drive uses the ATAPI/enhanced IDE interface as opposed to SCSI, however, which means that Squirrel interface owners won't be able to use it. However, it *will* work using Blittersoft's new ATAPI.DEVICE reported in last month's news.

Named the SCR-630, it has an average access time of 220ms, a seek access time of 190ms, and a data transfer rate of 702Kb/s, which should make it well-equipped for animation and video playback. The drive also supports multi-session Photo-CD.

All the usual external features should be available as well, including tray-loading and front panel controls. The SCR-630 should be available from the usual major computer peripheral stores.

Eye candy

Digital Candy BBS are releasing a demo-science CD-ROM for January 1996 which they claim will include the best productions from 1995, including all releases from The Party 5 that will be held this Christmas.

The disk will use an intelligent interface, and buyers of the CD will be able to register and receive 3 months of unlimited downloads. Call Digital Candy on 0191-232 5527 for more details.

Amiga back in the US of A

Amiga 4000T units were slated to hit the shelves of the remaining American Amiga dealers during the second week of November.

Amiga Technologies and Escom chose the Service Management Group (SMG) of Columbia, MD to distribute the Amiga product line in North America, and this distribution agreement covers the United States and Canada.

SMG may be familiar to American Amiga owners as the company responsible for providing warranty service for Amigas in recent years. The company have been involved with the Amiga market since 1990, and Escom apparently chose them because they not only had the connections to provide good distribution for the machines, but also experience providing service and support for the platform. The announcement was slated to be officially made at the Video Toaster Expo in Los Angeles, California in early November, where Amiga Technologies were expected to announce the processor planned for use in next-generation Amigas. AT and SMG were also slated to exhibit at the Las Vegas COMDEX show in mid-November – look for a report on that in this column next month.

However, all indications are that AT and SMG still don't plan to distribute the A1200 in the US market. The Service Management Group can be contacted at 10400 Little Patuxent Parkway, Suite 440, Columbia, MD 21044, USA; phone (410) 715-6850; fax (410) 715-6859.

USA news



by Denny Atkin

ImageF/X updated

Nova Design have announced the ImageF/X 2.1a upgrade. This new version now allows real-time painting and image processing on the NewTek Video Toaster's output display, as well as framegrabbing and rendering to the Toaster. But that's not all! Other new features include CineMatte, a blue/green-screen compositing system; CyberGrafx support; ability to use the SCSI versions of the HP ScanJet II and Epson scanners; Fargo Primera Pro printer support; and support for the new PNG graphics format. There are numerous other tweaks and improvements.

ImageF/X 2.1a's suggested list price remains at $349.95. Upgrades to 2.1a will be available online at the AmiNet FTP sites in the biz/patch directory. If you don't have FTP access, Nova will mail the patch to registered users for a nominal shipping and handling fee. To check to see if you are registered, or order the upgrade, call; 1-800-IMAGE-69 in the US or Canada. European users call 001 804 282-1157.

Maple V Release 3

Waterloo Maple is now shipping a new version of the professional mathematics program, Maple V Release 3, for the Amiga. Maple V Release 3 is an interactive problem-solving environment featuring an advanced graphical user interface, software that maths majors, as well as students and researchers who need to do advanced statistical analysis on their Amigas, will find invaluable. It shares all the functionality that exists for Maple V Release 3 on other platforms – including typeset maths output, 2D and 3D plotting, animations, export to LaTeX, and all help facilities. Maple V provides symbolic and numeric solutions to problems in algebra, calculus, linear algebra, differential equations, geometry, statistics and more.

Visualisation features include 2D plots, 3D plots, and animations. Maple V also features a complete programming language you can use to develop custom mathematical applications.

The Amiga version of Maple V Release 3 was developed by Dr Tomas Rokicki, best known as the creator of AmigaTeX from Radical Eye Software, and Dr Willy Langeveld, author of the VLT terminal emulator. For upgrade or pricing information, e-mail info@maplesoft.com.

World of Amiga reborn

The World of Amiga show in Toronto, Canada – an annual tradition for years – ceased operations as Commodore were gasping their last breaths. Now that Escom and SMG are resurrecting the Amiga platform, this end-user Amiga show has risen Phoenix-like from the grave as well. The World of Amiga show will be held again at the Toronto International Centre on 8 to 10 December. SMG will be there, showing the new A4000T, as well as a number of other third-party Amiga distributors.

If you read this before the show and you're interested in attending, send e-mail to woa@wonder.ca to join the show's Internet mailing list, or point your web browser to http://www.wonder.ca. You can also write WCi InfoTech Div., c/o Wonder Computers, 371 Old Kingston Rd., Scarborough, ON, M1C 1B7 Canada; phone or fax at (416) 201-2333.

IAM get you online

If you're ready to live the cliché and surf the Internet, but you can't figure out what software you need and where to find it all, Intangible Assets Manufacturing (IAM) of Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania have the kit you need.

'Eight Freely Redistributable Disks to Connect Your Amiga!' is a disk set of PD and shareware programs with everything you need to get online. IAM offer to save you the inconvenience of having to download all the files you'll need to 'cruise the information highways.' The set includes terminal programs, a full suite of Internet programs (TCP/IP, SLIP, PPP, Web browser, FTP, etc.), virus checkers, compression utilities, and more.

The $27 price simply covers the cost of duplication and the trouble IAM's Dale Larson went through to put together this collection; IAM don't actually offer support for the products. To get the most out of them, you should take advantage of IAM's $49.95 offer for a package including the disk set and Dale's excellent, if overnamed, book 'Connect Your Amiga! A Guide to the Internet, LANs, BBSs and Online Services.'

IAM recently signed an agreement with UK company Fourth Level Development to distribute their products in the US, while Fourth Level will distribute IAM's products in Europe – AmiFileSafe, an improved Amiga filesystem, is available now. For more information write to info@iam.com via the net, or if you're stuck with snail-mail, 828 Ormond Avenue, Drexel Hill, PA 19026-2604, USA. Phone (610) 853 4406 (orders only), or fax (610) 853 3733. European readers contact Fourth Level at 31 Ashley Hill, Montpelier, Bristol, England BS6 5JA, Tel: +44 117 955 8225, Fax: +44 117 955 9157.

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LEWISHAM — 31 Riverdale — 0181 852 6888
LOUGHTON — 221 High Road — 0181 532 1077
MILE END — 249/251 Whitechapel Road — 0171 247 8848
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STREATHAM — 226/228 High Road — 0181 769 8922
TOOTING — 245 Upper Tooting Road — 0181 672 5144
TOTTENHAM HALE (Office World) — Unit 8, Tottenham Hale Retail Park — 0181 493 9848
WALTHAMSTOW — 12/13 Selbourne Walk — 0181 520 8633
WEST EALING — 66 Uxbridge Road — 0181 810 0323
WOOD GREEN — 87/89 High Road — 0181 881 7399
WOOLWICH — 47/49 Powis Street — 0181 316 4037

LUTON — Unit 22 Arndale Centre
LUTON (Office World) — Castle Street — 01582 488642

MAIDENHEAD — 59 Nicholson Walk — 01628 770050
MAIDSTONE — 124 Chequers Centre, Water Lane — 01622 750499
MALDON — 80/82 High Street — 01621 858388

GREATER MANCHESTER
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LEVENSHULME — 817 Stockport Road — 0161 224 6066
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MIDDLETON — 21 The Arndale Centre — 0161 654 4020
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MANSFIELD — Unit 25, Four Seasons Centre — 01623 427450
MARGATE — 61 High Street — 01843 291233
MILTON KEYNES (Office World) — Grampian Gates, Winter Hill — 01908 231746
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NEWPORT — 23/24 John Frost Square — 01633 244917
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NORTH SHIELDS — 21 Bedford Way — 0191 257 2332

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NORTHAMPTON (Office World) — 67/83 Bridge Street — 01604 259088

NORWICH — Unit 22, The Castle Mall

NOTTINGHAM — 23 Listergate — 0115 941 6277
NOTTINGHAM — 4 The Elite, Queen Street — 0115 958 2100
NOTTINGHAM (Office World) — Huntingdon Street — 0115 958 8244

OXFORD (HEADINGTON) — 112 London Road — 0186 574 1585
OXFORD (Office World) — 14-16 Park End Street — 0186 572 2422

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PONTEFRACT — 13/14 Salter Row — 01977 704459
PORT TALBOT — 101 Station Road — 01639 881211
PORTSMOUTH (Office World) — Victory Retail Park — 01705 828118

PRESTON — 14 Fishergate Centre — 01772 884121
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SCUNTHORPE — 127/131 High Street — 01724 276006
SELBY — Unit 15, Market Cross Centre — 01757 708778

SHEFFIELD — 129 Pinstone Street — 0114 279 8800
SHEFFIELD (Office World) — Eyre Street — 0114 279 6481

SHREWSBURY — 25 Charles Darwin Shopping Centre — 01743 233021

SLOUGH — 210 High Street — 01753 532626
SLOUGH (Office World) — 105 Farnham Road — 01753 535282

SOUTHAMPTON — 77 Queensway — 01703 220255
SOUTHAMPTON (Office World) — Western Esplanade — 01703 222136

SOUTHEND ON SEA — 3/5 High Street — 01702 391474

SOUTHPORT — 70 Chapel Street — 01704 500547
SPALDING — 3/7 Station Road — 01775 769669
STAFFORD — 12 Greengate Street — 01785 229300
STANLEY — 92 Front Street — 01207 232877
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STOKE (LONGTON) — 36 Longton Exchange (Bennett Precinct) — 01782 596002
ST. AUSTELL — Unit 23, Old Vicarage — 01726 71488
SUDBURY — 19 North Street — 01787 883833
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WALTHAM CROSS — 135 High Street — 01992 632828
WALTON ON THAMES — 105/107 New Zealand Avenue — 01932 269949
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WARRINGTON — Unit 52, Golden Square
WARRINGTON (Office World) — School Brow — 01925 241381

WEYMOUTH — 22/23 St. Mary Street — 01305 789089

WIGAN — 38 Standishgate — 01942 241919
WIGAN (Office World) — Wallgate — 01942 491241

WISBECH — 12 Horsefair — 01945 466774
WOKING — 53 Commercial Way — 01483 776321
WOLVERHAMPTON — 78-79 The Mander Centre — 01902 24040
WORCESTER — 40 The Shambles — 01905 724497
WORTHING — 74/76 Montague Street — 01903 214122
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THE Cover

This month you get the best of both Amiga sound and image processing, along with our usual collection of Amiga utilities

Sound and vision

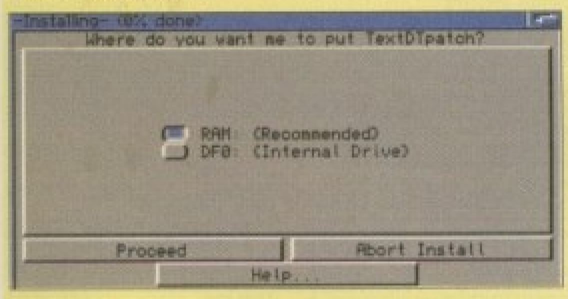
Extracting CoverDisk files

Before you even think of putting the cover disks anywhere near your computer you should make sure you write protect them. By moving the black tab in the top corner of the disk, so you can see through the hole, you prevent your disks being damaged in any way. There should be no reason why the cover disks need to be written to, so even if the computer asks you to write enable the disks, **don't do it**.

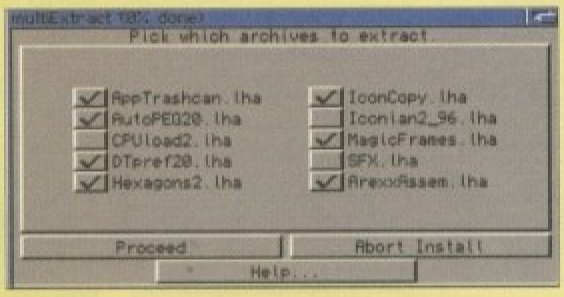
To extract the programs off the second disk you must make sure you have booted your computer with the first cover disk, otherwise your Amiga will not be able to find the c:Installer program, and frustration will soon set in.

To extract any single archive, simply double-click its icon and follow the on-screen instructions. If you want to quickly extract the program to RAM, select the NOVICE level on the welcome screen and press proceed once on the current screen, and then again on the next. The program can then be found in your RAM disk.

You also have the option of using a floppy disk. If you pick this option, make sure you have a blank formatted disk at the ready, and if you only have one drive get ready for lots of disk swapping and a long wait.



Readers lacking a hard drive will have to stick with extracting single programs



This is MultiExtract for all you sensible people with hard drive or lots of RAM

Hard drive users

Hard drive users do not have to boot with the first disk, but you must make sure you have Commodore's *Installer* program in your C drawer. This can be found on the first cover disk's C drawer by choosing *Show All Files* from the Workbench menu in the cover disk's window, and then opening the C drawer. You should then drag this over to your hard drive's C drawer.

All your hard drive owners will find MultiExtract very useful. It is a separate method of extracting our CoverDisk files and allows you to extract a number of files in one go to your hard disk or RAM.

When you run MultiExtract you will be presented with a number of check boxes, each representing one of the programs on that cover disk. Just de-select all the programs you do not want extracting, and then press proceed.

All the selected programs can now miraculously be found in the selected destination.

Image Engineer

Author: Simon Edwards
Workbench: 2.04

When I first tried this program I was completely bowled over by the quality of programming, and also the range of features it has. The first thing that will hit you is how fast Image Engineer is – even on a plain A1200 full colour previews are done in seconds. If you think all processes are done in 24-bits, this is pretty astounding.

Before you can use Image Engineer you *must* install the SuperView libraries, also found on the this first cover disk. Please refer to the separate box for more details on the SuperView libraries.

Once you have installed SuperView on your hard drive, you can extract Image Engineer into RAM or onto your hard drive. It is possible to run IE from where it is, but you should use the installer script because it sets up an assign which is used by IE's ARexx commands – otherwise it will not run correctly.

Once you have Image Engineer installed, when you first run it you can pick exactly what screen mode it should run in. If you pick a colour preview mode you will have to wait a short time while it sets up the correct screen colours. Once this is done you will be confronted by a rather boring screen. Now, before you try to do

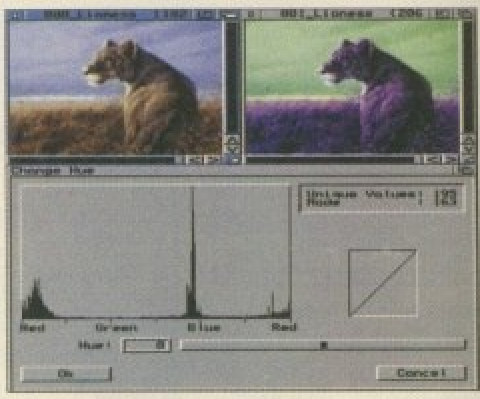


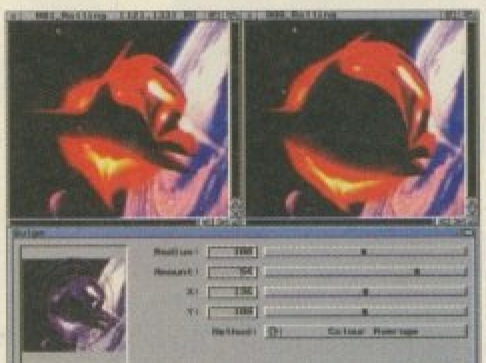
Image Engineer has a full suite of functions to adjust colour levels

anything you need to set up IE's preferences correctly which can be found in the Project menu. You will need to set a number of directories to tell IE where to find your own picture directory and its own ARexx and convolve file directories.

I would recommend you read the documentation that comes with Image Engineer as it has a huge number of options, and the documentation has a number of tutorials that will let you get to grips will all aspects of the program with the least amount of hassle.

However, I will try to explain some of the more used parts of the program. Loading a file is a doddle. Due to the SuperView libraries you can access a good number of file types including any supported Datatype. Therefore any GIFs, Jpegs or PCX files you have will be handled by Image Engineer with no problem at all.

Once you have a picture loaded you will see it in its own window. One of the best effects to show off Image Engineer's abilities is if you pick the twirl effect from the Edit menu. This pops up a requester which will allow you to select where and how it will effect the current image. The requester

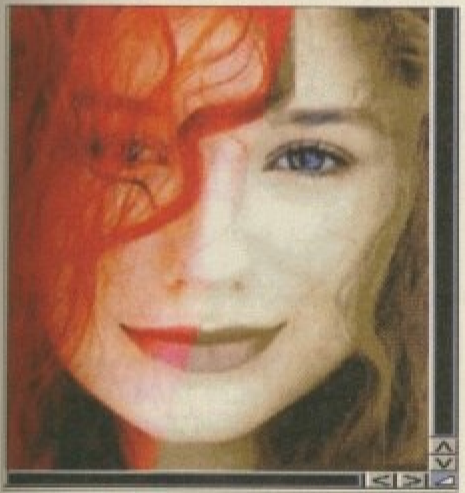


The bulge function at work

Disks



Another simple alpha example



The above image shows the improvement a Re-Calc colour can achieve

is very straightforward and fairly self explanatory, and as usual with these things, experimentation is the best way to learn.

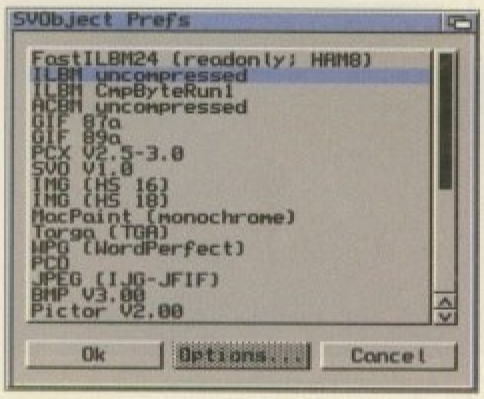
If you've had a good play with all of Image Engineer's functions, you should have come across its convolve and ARexx options. If you've set up the preferences properly you should have a selection of around 20 example ARexx scripts, and when you choose Load from the Convolve window, there is a selection of 15 convolves which you can add to yourself at a later date. These two options can provide some of Image Engineer's most powerful functions.

The ARexx functions provided by Image Engineer are potentially infinitely powerful. However, due to the very nature of ARexx you will need a little programming knowledge to be able to use this feature of IE. Luckily, there a good number of example functions ready for you to use and examine.

It is possible to add and remove these from the ARexx menu through the preferences. One function that is initially not in the ARexx menu is a batch convert script which allows you to convert a number of pictures to another picture format. Other good ARexx functions to try are the antique and motion blur ones which show what is possible with the ARexx functions.

A little tip for people using colour previews is that when you initially run Image Engineer it uses a standard colour selection which any loaded picture is dithered to. This means that potentially, you might not be getting the best colour representation from your pictures.

If, however, you choose the Re-calc Colours from the Project menu, this works out the best selection of colours for the loaded images which can greatly improve the display quality. If you do this, you should make sure you re-calculate the colours each time a new picture is loaded because the colours can go a little strange – especially a picture consist of a single colour range.



Someone pass me a stick quick so I can shake it at all these options

SuperView libraries

Author: Andreas Kleinert
Workbench: 2.04

The SuperView libraries are a collection of Amiga run time libraries that allow other programs that support SuperView to easily load, save, convert and process images with the minimum of ease. This allows programmers to concentrate on perfecting their program without having to worry about supporting every different type of picture format out there.

We have been given special permission from the author, Andreas Kleinert, to distribute a cut-down version of the original SuperView library. Please note: the archive found on this month's cover disk is a special version solely for *Amiga Computing* users and cannot be re-distributed by any other means – public domain or not. A full version of the SuperView library can be found on Aminet.

Installation of SuperView is very straightforward using the standard Amiga installer program. However, you must make sure you have the Installer program in your C: directory. If you do not boot up with your hard drive, insert the first cover disk in DF0:, open a shell and type *copy df0:c/installer c:* – this will have copied Installer into your C: directory.

Can I have more?

Image processing is pretty demanding when it comes to memory and processor usage. Therefore, when it comes to what amount of memory and processor you have, the term the more the merrier springs to mind.

All, however, is not lost. As Image Engineer is a very flexible program, there are a few tricks you can use to save on memory and to gain a good speed increase. A1200 users with extra memory will be able to use Image Engineer on a Hi-res 64 colour screen with comparative ease. The only time you will be really twiddling your fingers is when the program is initially setting itself up.

Even so, you can still very easily run out of memory, and if you have a few windows open you may want a little speed boost. The simplest way to get both is to switch Image Engineer to a grey scale preview screen. You do this from the project window by selecting the Screenmode option.

A dithered 16 colour grey scale preview will still give you a good idea of what the final picture will look like, and you have the advantage of saving memory along with a major speed increase in the window redrawing. When you do want an idea of what the final picture will look like, just select a render by pressing the right-Amiga R keys.

Alf Alpha

The alpha channel function of Image Engineer is a completely invaluable function. The idea of them does, however, take a little getting used to. Basically, you normally have a primary and secondary image, which you select from the Alpha menu option. What the alpha channel then does is to blend the primary image on top of the secondary image, depending on the brightness of the alpha channel being used. The way this works is that the black part of the alpha represents the secondary image, while the white part will only show the primary image. Any shade of grey in between will show a mixture of the primary and secondary.

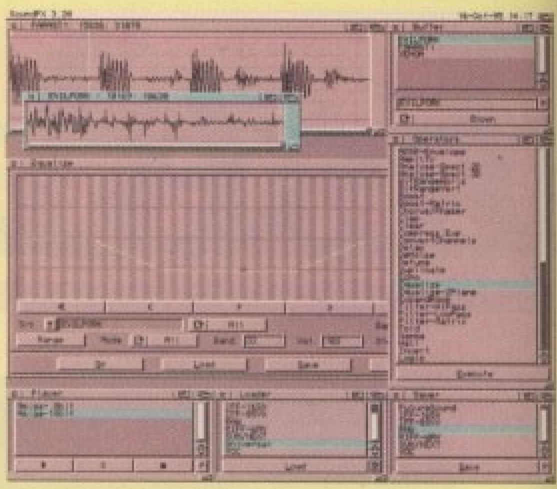
If you look at the circular alpha example, the darker part of the alpha shows the secondary image through it, while in the white part of the alpha, only the primary image can be seen.



This is a really simple example of alpha channels, that took about one minute to do from start to finish on an A1200

SoundFX

Author: Stefan Kost
Workbench: 2.04


SoundFX's simple interface hides many powerful features

What Image Engineer is for graphics, SoundFX is to samples. Sporting the ability to load nine different sample types and do 49 different processes, SoundFX will keep you pretty busy trying out all of its functions. However, as SoundFX is shareware the save function is disabled.

SoundFX is a fairly large program, so you will need a hard drive to run it. When you first extract SFX off the second cover disk you will only see two install icons. The installation is very straightforward, copying all the files and documentation into a single directory.

Due to its modular design, each of SFX's functions, such as load and process, are actually list views. This makes it much easier to handle any new modules that may be added at a later date. When you first start the program you will see five different list views which are load, save, player, buffer and operators.

The load and save lists show what different sample formats can be handled. Currently, SFX can load IFF 8 and 16-bits, raw sample data, PC RIFF-WAV, VOC, SUN/NEXT and the AIFF format. Luckily, you do not have to know what the sample you are loading is as SFX can automatically detect this.

As you might expect, SFX has a few extras when it comes to sample playing. Along with the normal Amiga's 8-bit replay, it will also manage 14-bit quality and can even play 16-bit sample direct out of fast RAM.

To find out about all of SoundFX's operators, you really need to read the AmigaGuide that comes with it, as many of them are very sophisticated. It would probably help to have a sound engineer at hand for some of them. There are many strange and wonderful effects such as sample morphing, 3D cube parameter modulation, AM/CS synthesis, 64 band equaliser, composite/additive/subtractive sound synthesis along with 2D and 3D spectrum analysis. See what I mean about that sound engineer!

You should be warned, however, that some of these functions can take a long time to complete, as SFX does its processing with 32-bit floating point operations for the highest sample quality.

Iconian

Author: Chad Randall
Workbench: 3.0

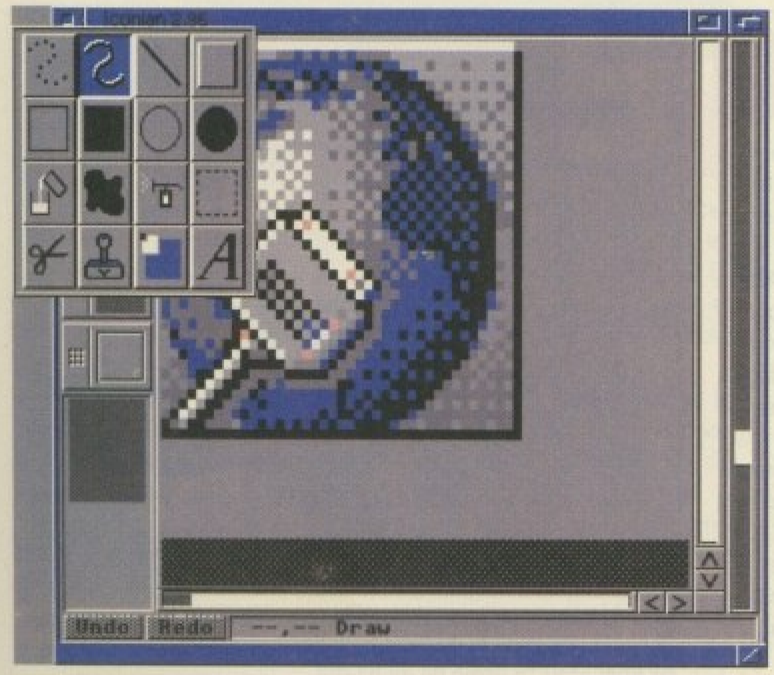
Iconian has been around now for a good while and this latest incarnation adds some major new changes to its interface. You may have come across its new multi-window format before, and initially this may seem a little cumbersome, but once you have sized and snapshotted the window in place it works very nicely indeed.

The major change comes in the form of a new gadget class. Called pop-up it allows a large number of graphical options to be hidden behind a single button. Click on the gadget and you can then choose from a selection of options.

The main use for this is to allow you to choose from any one of its 15 drawing tools. Along with the normal draw and fill functions, you can also create various bevel boxes and different dithers. The type of bevel box or dither is again chosen using this new pop-up gadget – a great improvement over the old unwieldy menu options.

Other handy features that Iconian has are the unlimited undo and redo functions, full on line help, a full ARexx port, and you can have multiple projects open.

For people who use them, Iconian has full NewIcons support, allowing you to create and change both the normal and NewIcon parts of the icon, in up to 256 colours. Please remember that Iconian is shareware. The registration fee is only $15 dollars. Well worth it for probably the best icon editor on the Amiga.

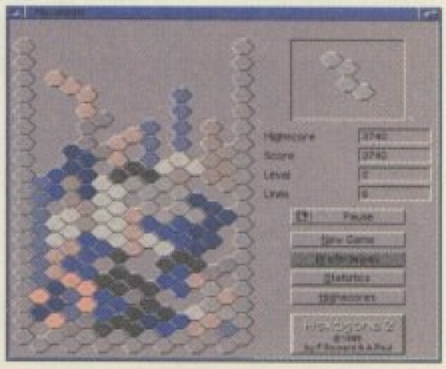


The new popup gadgets make Iconian's interface much easier to use

Hexagons2

Author: Frank Bernard
Workbench: 2.04

It is always nice to have a little relief now and again, and this Workbench-style Tetris game is just the job. Obviously, you are going to draw comparisons to Tetris, as you have various shapes falling down the screen and each time you get a line it disappears and you score points.

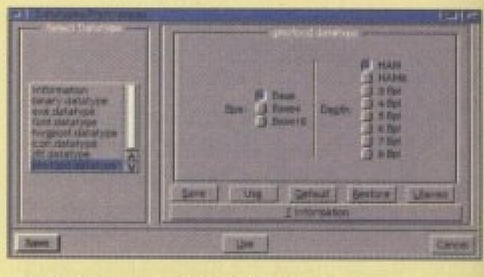

Another game of hexagons goes horribly wrong

However, this version was written by the author because he was getting bored with the original game being too easy. To make the game tougher he recreated the Tetris game using hexagons. This allows you to have more shapes, ten in fact, and it now takes six turns to fully rotate an object.

As it runs on the Workbench the game is very system friendly and will happily multitask alongside any other programs you have running. It supports AGA and will adjust its window colours to get the best look. Also, check out the great statistic screen so you can tell if the game is cheating by holding back those long blocks that you need.

Datatype Prefs

Author: Swen Stullich
Workbench: 3.0


Now you can use a single program to configure all those datatypes

When Workbench 3 came in and introduced Datatypes, the number of Datatypes being released into the public domain literally exploded, with even Commodore releasing a good few of them. One side effect of this is that varying Datatypes started to allow the user to adjust certain parts of how the datatype worked. The Jpeg Datatype is a good example, and also the C++ Datatype is another one.

The Jpeg Datatype is quite good because you get a nice GUI through which you can adjust the various aspects of the Datatype, but the C++ Datatype can only be changed by adjusting its environmental variables, via a text editor.

Well DTPrefs gives you a single interface through which you can change a large number of your Amiga's Datatypes. Currently supported are the binary, executable, font, postscript, icon, Jpeg and photoCD Datatypes. All but the Jpeg Datatype can be adjusted within DTPrefs, while all DTPrefs does for the Jpeg Datatype is to run its own preference program.

AutoPEG

Author: John Corigliano
Workbench: 2.04

To use the following program you need to have the Magic User Interface installed on your system. Without it you will not be able to run any MUI program.

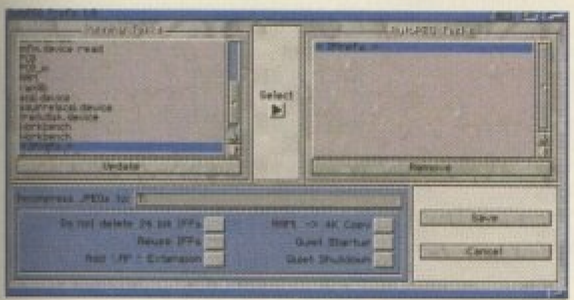


If you need to save space, your only option when it comes to pictures is to Jpeg them – the space saving over more conventional formats can be phenomenal. A file can be anywhere from 5 to 50 times smaller than conventional picture formats.

What do you do if you then want to load a Jpeg into DPaint, or another program that does not accept the Jpeg format. Well, to save you from having to manually convert a file each time you want to edit a Jpeg file, AutoPEG is here to save the day. AutoPEG will fool any program that tries to load a Jpeg into thinking it is actually loading a 24-bit IFF file.

Once you have extracted the archive you should install AutoPEG using the supplied install script. Before you can actually see AutoPEG in action you need to set up its preferences beforehand. Instead of just patching every program that tries to load a Jpeg, you can specify exactly which program should be patched. This allows programs that can handle Jpegs to use their own routines.

To add a program you should first run that program, then start up the AutoPEG preferences. You then need to locate that program in the left list view and add it to the program patch list in the right list view. If you now try to load a Jpeg there will be no more unknown file format errors.



Another elegant MUI interface makes AutoPEG a pleasure to use

AppTrashcan

Author: Ben Rogers
Workbench: 2.04



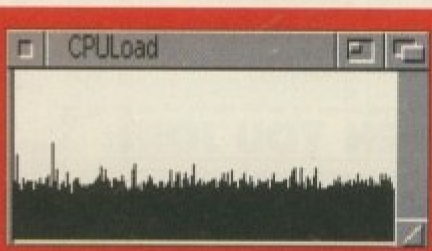
You may have noticed that the standard Amiga trashcan is pretty garbage. That is probably why there are a lot of replacement ones knocking around such as Blackhole.

AppTrashcan works slightly differently from these others as usually they only allow you to immediately delete any file you drop into them. The difference with AppTrashcan is that it works in the same way as the Mac's Wastebasket, without having the limitations of the old Amiga's trashcan.

When you run it you should see an AppIcon appear on your Workbench. If you drop any programs into this, they will be moved to a temporary directory on your hard drive. If you then want to get rid of these files you select 'Empty Trash' from the tools menu and everything will then be deleted. If you want you can change the trash icon and its name in both the icon and menu entry.

CPUload2

Author: Thomas Radtke
Workbench: 2.04



Ever wondered just how hard your Amiga is working with all those little programs beaverishly multi-tasking away in the background? Well even if you do not, CPUload2 will display a continuously growing graph representing the percentage of CPU time that is being used by your poor old Amiga. So even if you think your Amiga is not up to anything, now you can actually tell.

Faulty CoverDisks

If you should find your *Amiga Computing* CoverDisk damaged or faulty, please return it to:

TIB Plc, TIB House, 11 Edward Street, Bradford, W. Yorks BD4 7BH.

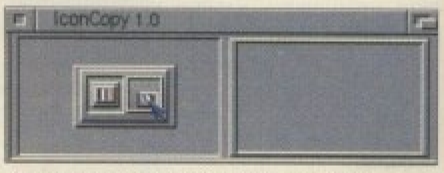
Please allow 28 days for delivery

IconCopy

Author: Tino Wildenhain
Workbench: 2.04

When it comes to manipulating icons they can be a little bit of a pain. What do you do if you want to copy an icon image to another icon, there is no supported way of using Workbench. So you either have to mess about loading up an icon editor such as Iconian and then do all your chopping and changing, or revert to using the shell to copy the info files across.

Well IconCopy gives a really simple way of doing just that. By having an Appwindow if you want to copy an icon's image to another icon. You just drop the new image on the left side of the IconCopy window, and then drop the other old icon into the right side – couldn't be simpler.



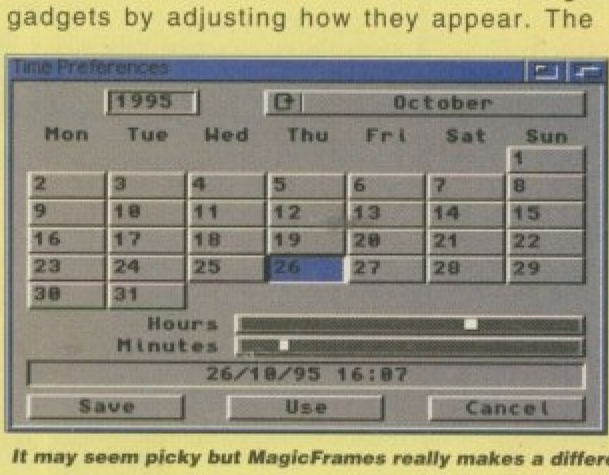
Simple drag and drop icon copying

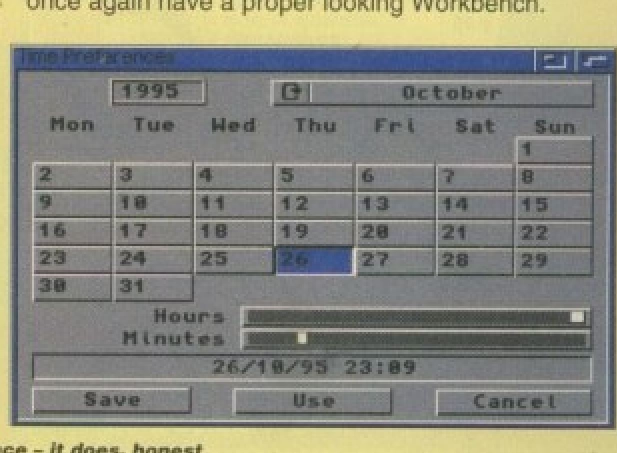
MagicFrames

Author: Luke Elliott
Workbench: 3.0

Only of use to people who use high resolution screens with a 1:1 pixel ratio, Magicframes improves the look of the standard Amiga gadgets by adjusting how they appear. The Gadtools gadgets, such as the buttons, frames and scrollers, actually have thick sides and a thin top and bottom when used on a high resolution screen because they are set-up to be used on a plain 640 x 256 screen.

On a high resolution screen this simply looks naff. Well, Magicframes patches a few things in AmigaDOS and corrects this problem, so you can once again have a proper looking Workbench.





It may seem picky but MagicFrames really makes a difference – it does, honest

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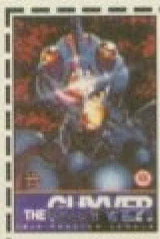
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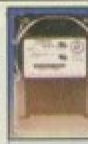
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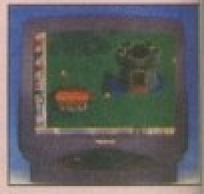
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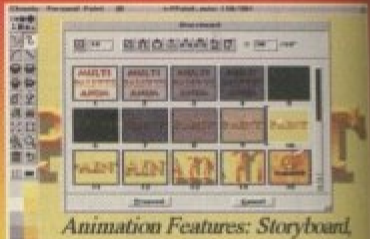
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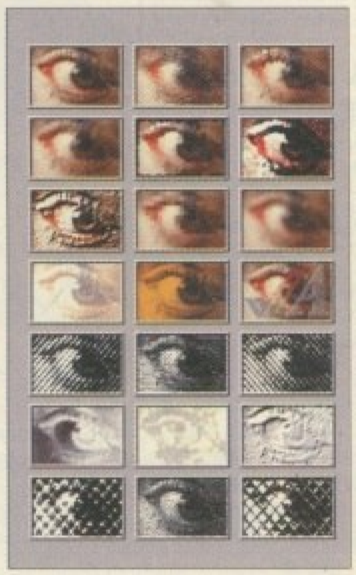




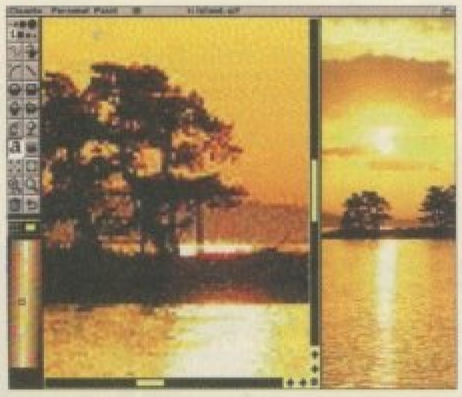
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- New, faster image processing effects, including transparency, alpha channel and single-image stereograms (both SIRDS and custom pattern stereograms, as in 'Magic Eye')
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- First paint program worldwide to support the new PNG (Portable Network Graphics) file format. Includes an ARexx script to convert GIFs to PNG.
- Support of Retargettable Graphics (display cards like the Picasso, Retina, Piccolo, Rainbow, EGS, Talon, Cybergraphics etc.)
- Animation on RTG display cards (with or without double-buffering)
- Direct, high-quality 24-bit printing (Colour and Black & White) and interface to third-party software such as Studio Print Server
- Professional and fast modes for converting 24-bit pictures (IFF, PNG, PCX, PBM etc.) to 256 colours or less
- HAM, HAM8 and Picasso 24-bit viewer active during colour reduction
- External input/output modules (loaders and savers) for easy extensions and upgrades. Modules for IFF, PNG, PCX, PBM, Amiga DataTypes and several others are included. A GIF module is available from public domain sources.
- Support and editing of IFF, PNG and GIF project annotations (Author, Copyright and Comment fields, plus Amiga filenotes)
- Autoscroll painting
- Workbench application icon (drag and drop)
- Basic set of ARexx commands for presentations, format conversions and printing



- ASL-compatible file requester
- More power through machine language code: the software is, in part, up to 500 per cent faster
- 'New Look' user interface
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Performing

Professional animation on the Amiga is about to get another boost thanks to Blittersoft's MainActor Broadcast. Gareth Lofthouse gives it an audition.

Earlier this year Amiga animators were treated to Animworks 2, a package that provided them with a reasonable amount of power for the price. So why do Blittersoft think MainActor Broadcast is worth so much more, then?

The answer according to the designers is that MainActor Broadcast is virtually a new program, with a more powerful interface and greater versatility than any of its rivals. Thankfully a closer look at the new features included in the program show this claim at least has some grounding.

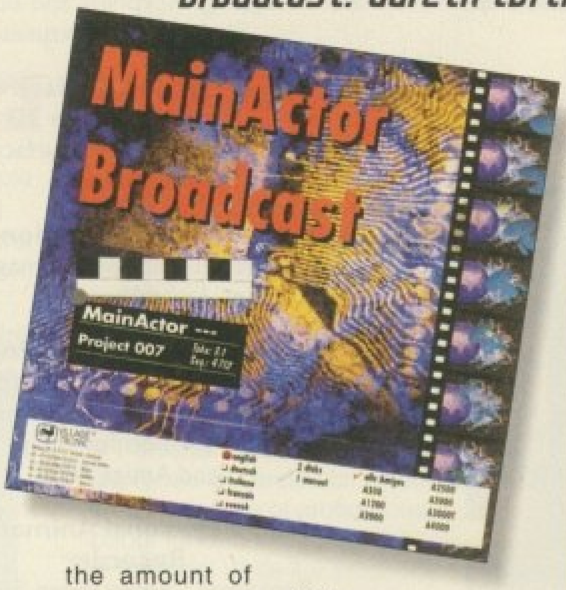
To give anyone unfamiliar with MainActor an idea of what the program is about, it's important to realise it's more of a modular animation processing package rather than an animation maker in its own right. It's a program where sound, animation and transitions can be added together to make an overall project, which in turn can be converted to a format of your choice.

Having installed the program using the standard installer method, the user will find Main Actor Broadcast has a simple interface that can run purely off menus or, as will be more commonly preferred, by using the various windows that open up on Workbench. It all has a clean, accessible appearance in contrast to the function crowded front-end that accompanies Animworks2.

CONVENIENT

Essentially the program is controlled by three main windows, though each of these provide access to other windows within. The most commonly used one will be the newly designed project manager, since it shows the animation currently activated and allows users to edit it in a variety of ways. It can also handle up to a hundred projects, which should keep even the busiest animator catered for.

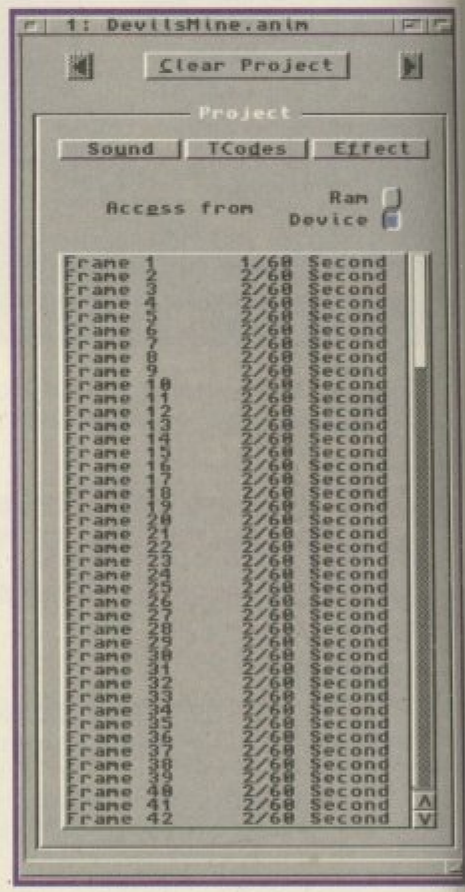
One of the first small but handy additions is that it's possible to choose where MainActor Broadcast will access data from using the radio buttons in the project window. This gives you a convenient choosing between playing animations back from RAM - the smoothest and fastest option - or from a storage device that will be slower but won't limit your animation by the amount of physical memory available.



The project menu allows users to access the sound editor, a window in which its possible to overlay your project with music of sound effects. Incidentally, MainActor Broadcast's sound support is module independent, which means users can use the same sound information on every animation or picture format the program supports. Sounds can be copied, removed and tested, and users can alter the characteristics of an activated sound by adjusting its volume, stereo balance and the frame at which you want the effect



MainActor Broadcast will play back an animation in a window, but don't expect any sort of speed unless you are using a high-powered graphics card



The project window can handle up to 100 animations, and gives the user easy tools for adding sounds and effects to specific frames

Strutting platforms

Since MainActor Broadcast is in part aimed at professionals working across different computer platforms, its worth considering how it shapes up against rival programs on PC or Mac.

Adobe Premiere is probably the most powerful animation rival, boasting a pretty and fool-proof interface that makes MainActor Broadcast look dull, difficult and outdated. As is often the case, however, this costs the user dear in terms of speed, and full-screen playback of animations is impossible without an MPEG card.

The range of effects available, on the other hand, is wider, more impressive and easier to implement than is the case with MainActor Broadcast. Combining animation with sound, transitions and effects proves more of an instinctive process than is possible with the Amiga rival.

Turning to the issue of money, however, Adobe software is always prohibitively expensive, and Amiga users don't mind losing gloss on the interface to get faster programs at a much more affordable price. Add to that the fact that MainActor Broadcast is unrivalled in its ability to convert files between PC, Mac and Amiga platforms, and it does seem to hold its own. It's just a shame it's not as affordable as some may have hoped.

While we're on the subject of affordability, users without a RTG board are not going to be able to take full advantage of MainActor Broadcast anyway, and many of the effects can be achieved when creating the animation, so you should take a look at MainActor Pro before you pay for this much more expensive version.

MainActor Pro lacks support for some of the important formats available in MainActor Broadcast, it has an inferior interface and it lacks the ability to overlay effects on your projects. That said, it will make more sense for most people who just want to work with Amiga animation formats.

for a price

Theatrical effect

Here's the full list of MainActor Broadcast's new effect modules you can overlay on the animation:

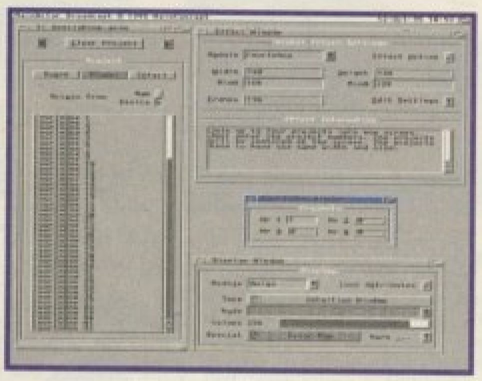
3D Stars: Creates a moving starfield
Background: Makes one project a background for the main project
Fade To Colour: Fades selected project to desired colour
Fade To Image: Fades one project into another
Four in One: Combine four projects into one animation
Rotate: Rotate your project on the x,y or z axis
Scale: Rescale project to a new size
Scroll In: Scrolls project in from any side of the screen
Scroll Out: Opposite of Scroll In
Sequencer: Puts up to five projects together to make one new project
Text: Overlays project with text lines in various colours
Wipe Squares: Fades in another project using squares

to begin. Just as important as far as the program's audio capabilities go, however, is the fact that MainActor Broadcast has 19 sound modules for all the major types of sound files.

One of the biggest additions to the program is found on the effects side of the project window. This allows users to overlay a range of instant effects on top of the animation they've imported, ranging from various wipes to sequencing, rotation and star bursts. In fairness some could be achieved in DPaint just as easily, but others are a real bonus.

It's particularly useful to be able to scale animations down within MainActor Broadcast, allowing users to downsize their animations until they can run smoothly enough for their system.

The demonstration disk gives some idea of how these effects can be used, albeit that it's not the most impressive use of the program's potential I can imagine. What is for sure is that the effect descriptions and adjustability made available in this particular window make it an especially accessible and attractive area of the program.



Play animations, show specific frames and use the impressive support for animation formats in the control window

Perhaps most important of the main gadgets, however, is the control window. It's here that you begin to gain a sense of MainActor Broadcast's unrivalled versatility, thanks to the inclusion of over 20 load and save modules for animations and pictures.

Animators working to capitalise on the strengths of different computer platforms will find the program's support for Mac and PC formats like Quicktime and AVI an absolute must. The same window also allows playback of the active project and viewing of individual frames. A third button opens an information box with all the details on the current animation you're likely to need, including size in bytes, number of colour palettes, loop flags and flags for any special attributes.

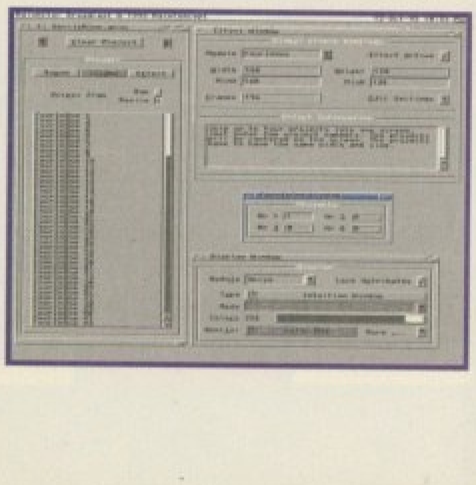
PROFESSIONAL

MainActor Broadcast's suitability for the professional is further increased by its support for any graphics card with up to 16.7 million colours. This means, for example, you'll be able to make animations from Lightwave using 24-bit frames. On the other hand, the program's flexibility means you'll be able to convert 24-bit animations for viewing on a low res monitor.

An ARexx port has been added to the program which will allow users to control the whole package from within, say, AD Pro - a feature that can only help to maximise the speed and convenience of the program as a whole.

Criticism has to be aimed, however, at the manual, both for it's shoddy construction and, more seriously, its unhelpful layout. It takes a lot of knowledge for granted, there are no tutorials and what there is could have been a lot clearer than it is in places. Digita and Softwood knock out well-written manuals with software selling at a third of the price, so there's no excuse for not supplying more helpful documentation with MainActor Broadcast.





The effects window will be of most interest to buyer of MainActor Broadcast, with its range of options and text descriptions

Curtain fall

Despite being billed as **the** multi-media and animation player for Amiga users, MainActor Broadcast doesn't immediately induce a frenzy of excitement in the first time user. In fact, those who haven't experienced the value of the program's previous incarnations might be left wondering what all the fuss is about.

None of which changes the fact that MainActor Broadcast is an important and useful advancement in Amiga animation. Basically, there's no alternative for many of the professional animators who need flexibility and processing power.

Increasingly, professional animators are producing work on more than one hardware platform, and MainActor Broadcast will give such users more flexibility than ever before. Using Blittersoft's package will allow them, for example, to produce an animation in DPaint on the Amiga, then save it as an AVI file to incorporate it into a PC-based project. With the addition of built-in effect modules and a more versatile interface, MainActor has been given a complete overhaul.

The only problem is that comprehensive support for file formats and a limited range of effects won't justify the radical hike in price, and unless you've got a RTG board you're probably best opting for its older and cheaper sibling, MainActor Pro. As it stands, I suspect only very serious animators will pay out for this flexible but pricey program.

SYSTEM ESSENTIALS

RED = Essential **BLACK** = Recommended

512 Kb RAM — OS 2.04

The bottom line

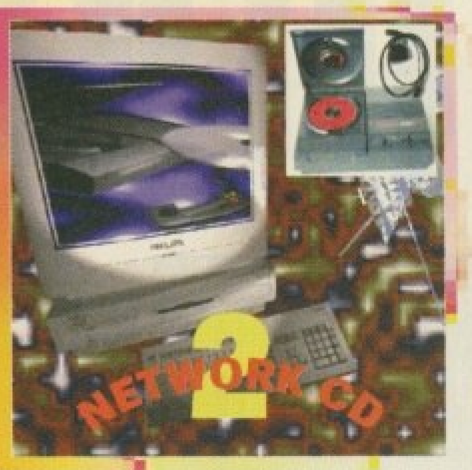
Product: MainActor Broadcast
Price: £179.95
Supplier: Blittersoft
Tel.: 01908 261466

Ease of use	8
Implementation	7
Value for money	6
Overall	7

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Sounds familiar

Paul Austin auditions a cheap taster for Tune Builder – Arpeggio Now!

If you're one of the few who missed our preview and subsequent review of the AirWorks masterpiece, the next page will be music to your ears. This is because the uninitiated Tune Builder/Arpeggio Now! provides an interactive method of tailoring pre-recorded music to your requirements. If you need a change of mood or want to add a dramatic crescendo, the ideal slice of music can simply be slotted in the correct spot.

The whole process hinges on multiple edit points which have already been inserted into the 16-bit data on the accompanying CD. As a consequence, it's possible to take only what is required from the target tune and cut, copy and paste it to build a new tune of your own design. Tune Builder actually works by importing the original 16-bit data from the accompanying CD. From this it creates a more manageable 8-bit dummy. And it's this 8-bit clone which is used for previewing edits during assembly.

Once your designer tune is complete, the software reverts to the imported 16-bit data on your hard drive and compiles your master tune in the format and quality of your choice.



From a rather bland main screen the first port of call is the Library section where you're free to filter and audition the tunes on offer. Obviously, with the single CD taster its usefulness isn't particularly apparent, however as your collection grows its ability to filter the available tunes soon becomes invaluable.

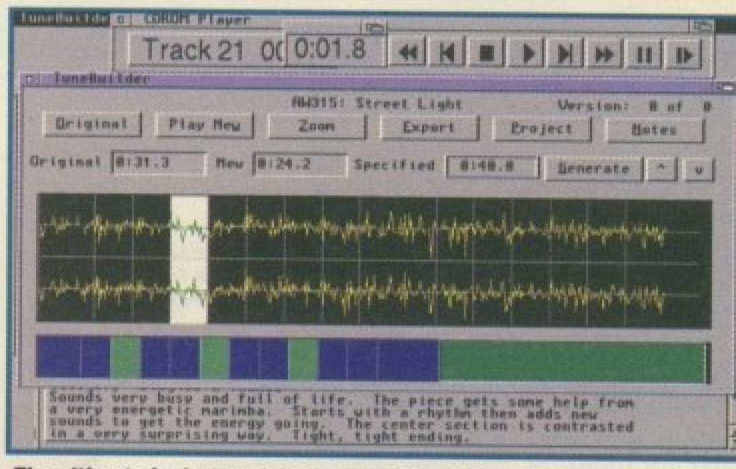
Assuming you've isolated a particular tune, the next step is to audition it, and to do so you'll need to fire up your CD-ROM drive by selecting the CD Player preview from the pull-downs. At this point a tape deck control pops-up ready to preview your chosen tune or audition others. Once the Player Preview is active, simply double-clicking on any track will automatically locate it and start playback direct from the CD in 16 bit stereo. As you select each track, the software provides a brief overview in the form of an editable note, the ID of the track and the CD on which it's stored. Assuming you've found one or more tracks you want they can be tagged and then it's time to head off for the project builder to import your selection. That done, the software sets about spooling the 16-bit data from the CD from which an 8-bit preview sample is created. Assuming you've imported all the tunes you require, simply select one and it's off to the Tune Builder editing screen.

Once safely entrenched in the editor, you're presented with a waveform of the entire tune segmented into numerous individual snippets – it's these seamless cuts that are the key to the whole process.

To audition the tune simply click on the Play Original. If you're happy with things as they are you can export the tune in the rate and file format of your choice. If things aren't ideal you can adjust it by specifying a user-defined length. If you then click on generate, Tune Builder automatically interpolates the existing track to produce a customised version.

If you don't like this initial mix, clicking on generate again will produce a completely new version. If this still doesn't produce perfection, the next option is to use a combination of shift and mouse clicks to select individual sections. The selection is then played in sequence to generate a new custom-built tune. If you like it, again a simple click on the Export will generate a new master.

The final and most flexible method is to opt for a full edit session by employing the Assembler Bar to build a tune block by block. To use it you simply click on the block you like, drag it across and drop it on the bar – repeating the process until you have exactly the arrangement you require. As you select a new block its counterparts in the Assembler window light up, so it's easy to construct repeats or verse/chorus sections.



The ultimate in drag and drop musicality all for a piddling thirty bucks. A bargain if ever there was one...

In addition, complete drag and drop control, even volume adjustment, is available, enabling you to add space for voice-overs or fade outs.

The bass line

All the major sampling formats, options and rates are supported across Amiga, PC, Mac and others. And as you'd expect, there's direct support for the Amiga family of direct-to-disk sampling systems.

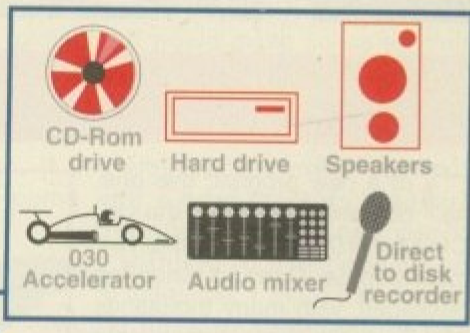
Not surprisingly, output quality is superb, ranging from 8-bit mono to full CD quality stereo. The tracks themselves are generally excellent, offering a mix of styles with vocals and guitars blended with brass, strings, keyboards and percussion.

Basically, Arpeggio Now! is a classic example of power marketing. You get Tune Builder in its entirety plus an eight track taste of its potential via the single CD.

If you like what's on offer, expanding the system is simply a matter of investing in more CDs. Essentially a no lose situation that provides a window on a development in Amiga music. Need I say more. Don't be cheap, give it a go, you won't regret it.

SYSTEM ESSENTIALS

RED = Essential **BLACK** = Recommended



The bottom line

Product: Tune Builder
Supplier: AirWorks Media
Price: Price: $29.95
Tel: 001 403 424 9922 (Canada)

Ease of use	**10**
Implementation	**9**
Value for money	**10**
Overall	**9**

Computer

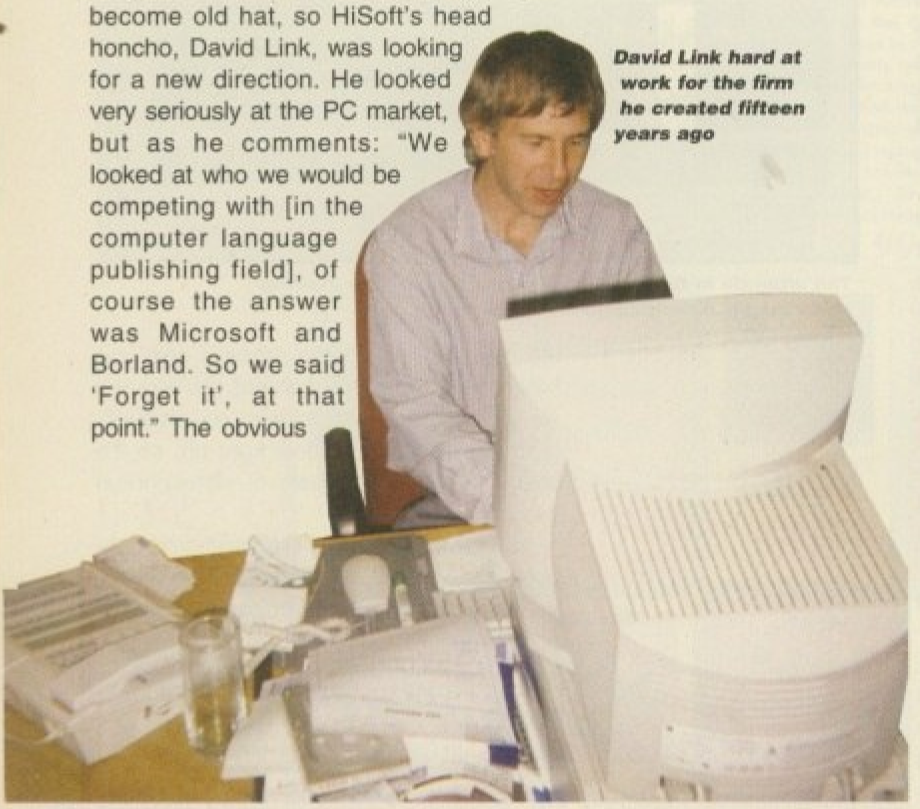
This month, as the start of an occasional series of in-depth looks at long-standing Amiga companies, we look at HiSoft

T was a balmy day the day I went down to Bedfordshire to visit the premises of HiSoft, the company behind such well-known products as the Squirrel SCSI interface and the Aura sound sampler.

HiSoft's history started way back in 1980, even before the Amiga was a twinkle in Jay Miner's eye. The first product off the HiSoft development line was a Pascal compiler, appropriately enough named HiSoft Pascal, and an assembler package for the Nascom 'home' computer. Like most computers of that era, it was really a hobbyist market with very much do-it-yourself products.

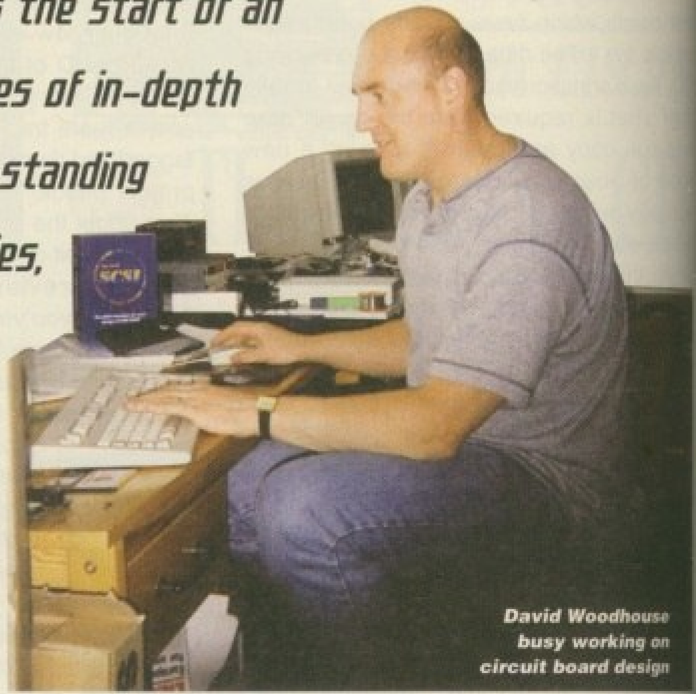
It was in 1982 when the first real home computer boom hit the UK with the release of the Spectrum, and HiSoft were in there fast, converting their Pascal and assembler to suit the Spectrum's non-CP/M environment. It was at this point that the assembler got the name it was to keep through all its incarnations to the present day: DevPac.

By 1985, Z80 machines were starting to become old hat, so HiSoft's head honcho, David Link, was looking for a new direction. He looked very seriously at the PC market, but as he comments: "We looked at who we would be competing with [in the computer language publishing field], of course the answer was Microsoft and Borland. So we said 'Forget it', at that point." The obvious conclusion that HiSoft came to was to develop for the new 68000-based machines that were emerging, like the Atari ST. DevPac was swiftly ported, helped by the prior development of a version for the Sinclair QL, and a Pascal was worked on, although not to fruition. At this point, the obvious language to work on had to be BASIC. David Link recalls: "At the time it [working on a BASIC compiler as opposed to an interpreter] was innovative."



David Link hard at work for the firm he created fifteen years ago

It was, in fact, an interactive, incremental compiler; one which behaved like an interpreter but was actually a compiler, a fact that most magazines seemed to ignore and as a result HiSoft BASIC suffered in comparison with GFA Basic and the others that were around. Over the years, HiSoft, in search of other complementary products for their line, took over Kuma, creators of K-Spread, a well-known spreadsheet at the time, and looked to expand further.



David Woodhouse busy working on circuit board design

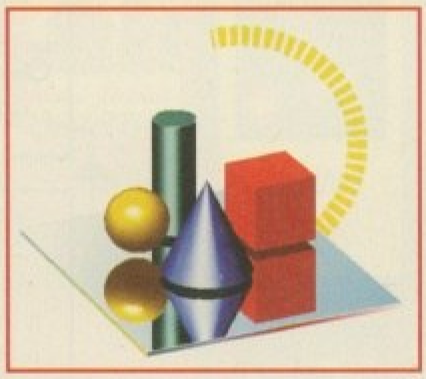
Until about 1990, HiSoft resolutely remained an Atari-based company. But with the advent of Workbench 2-based machines, the Amiga became a lot more attractive to HiSoft.

ASSOCIATIONS

Along the way, HiSoft had become casually involved with a company producing music products for the ST called AVR, and David Link decided it was time for HiSoft to develop its consumer product range rather than solely concentrating on programming tools. So HiSoft eventually

New product: Cinema 4D

Not a new product, this one, but certainly new to the UK. Cinema 4D is one of the two most popular German rendering packages, with many thousands of users. It feels like a mix between LightWave and Imagine in use and looks similar to Real3D3. Cinema 4D is a program with a wide range of unique facilities not readily found in either LightWave or Imagine. Features like accurate sunlight, where the direction, angle and intensity of your scene's 'sun' are governed by latitude, longitude and time settings.



Cinema 4D also provides easy inverse kinematics, without the need to set up tiresome bones or states. Like Imagine, Cinema 4D makes use of a timeline function to set up the actors within a scene, their motions, the animation of their textures and effects to apply to them. But Cinema 4D also has the same ease of use as LightWave when it comes to actually setting up a scene, with freely positionable objects shown in a variety of 3D views.

When it comes to texturing an object in Cinema 4D, all the guesswork is taken out of the process by using a mesh which you can see wrapped around the shape you are texturing, and which can be adjusted to suit your needs.

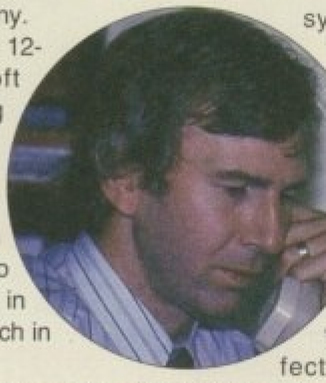
ETA: November **Price:** £199.95



veterans

took over AVR, with all the rights to the software and hardware that they produced including StereoMaster, MegaloSound and VideoMaster.

HiSoft has always been an international company, so nobody in the industry was particularly surprised when they brought out Maxon Magic; an Amiga oddity, it was a commercial screen blanker program. Maxon is one of Germany's largest Amiga software producing companies and an alliance had been forged between the two companies on their many meetings at German Atari and Amiga shows. This alliance will also bear fruit with DiskMagic and Cinema4D, both products which are extremely popular in Germany.



David Link

With Aura, the company's 12-bit sound sampler, HiSoft invaded the burgeoning improved quality sound sampler market, and then came the Squirrel. The Squirrel is arguably HiSoft's most popular product to date, with sales numbering in the thousands since its launch in December 94.

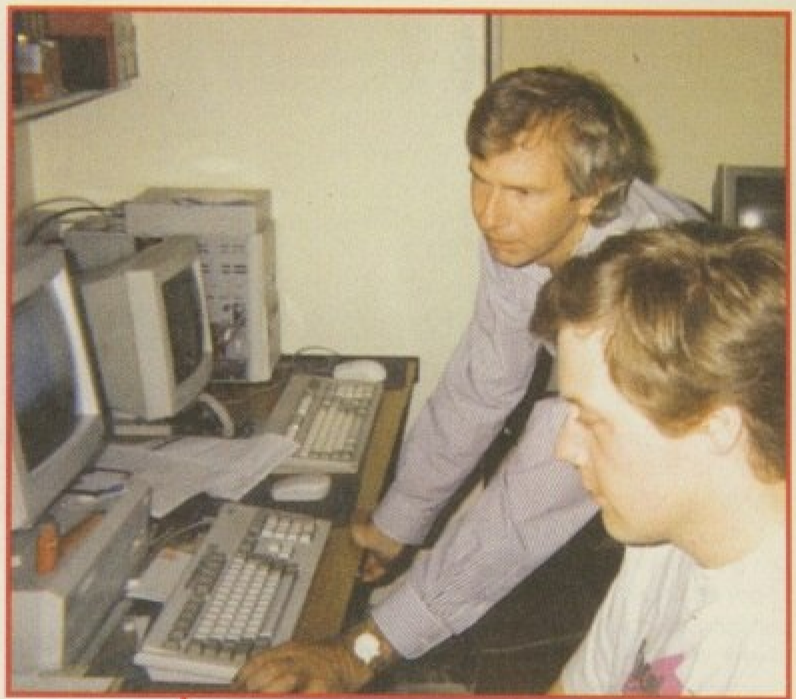
HiSoft themselves have sold CD-ROM drives to approximately 90 per cent of the people they have sold a Squirrel to. But as you'll see looking around these pages, the Squirrel itself is about to be accompanied by a bigger brother, and, uncommonly for hardware products, HiSoft are offering their existing customers an upgrade path to the new model. This is not the only new product coming from HiSoft over the next few months as a quick glance at the rest of this article will tell you.

The future according to HiSoft

I asked David Link what he would like to see happening with the Amiga over the next year or so. "I think that the A1200 as a base machine is very important because it's competitive when compared to a PC. To be honest, although you can build your own PC, and it can be cheap, any like for like PC system is going to be more expensive, not cheaper, because the entry level system specification has gone up and memory is always going to be expensive.

"Therefore, I think we are going to find that the entry level PC is not going to become any cheaper and might, in fact, become slightly more expensive. Consequently, the A1200 is going to be perfectly poised to succeed in the entry level market, with a higher spec than an entry level PC and much better performance, even with the current A1200.

"I believe that what the man on the street wants is a machine that can run all his word processing, general home stuff, comms, CD, plus the odd graphics program. He could probably comfortably do that on a 6Mb A1200. He won't be able to get away with less than a 16Mb PC. He'll have to buy Windows



Alex Kiernan and David Link discuss the latest version of the Squirrel software

> I believe that what the man on the street wants is a machine that can run all his word processing, general home stuff, comms, CD, plus the odd graphics program

95, whereas Workbench comes with the Amiga, and he won't be able to use a TV to display it, which, admittedly, is a bit of a moot point, because at the end of the day, when you start getting serious the first thing you need is a monitor, although there are actually some very good TVs out there now with SCART input, etc.

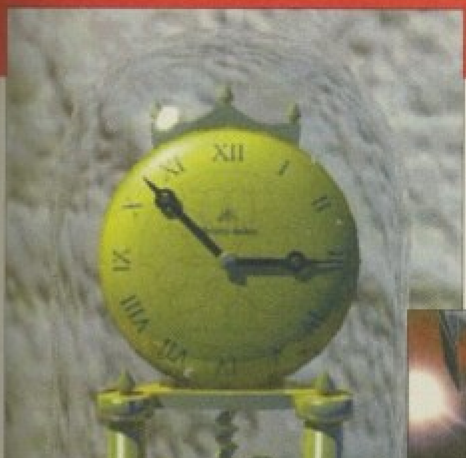
"So, I would want to see the A1200 continue as the base machine. As to what Escom do with it, I'm not sure I care that much because there are so many excellent third-party add-ons for it that I still think it's a worthwhile machine that will last for at least the next two years. Obviously, it would be good to see Escom putting more memory, preferably 4Mb and a faster processor in it, an 040, whatever, but it would need a fairly major bus change.

"I would rather see an 040 in there than an 030 because of the 040's performance and increasing price competitiveness, although it's still fairly difficult to get your hands on at the moment, but with advance buying, it shouldn't be a problem. It would make sense for there to be SCSI on board at some point, but obviously I'm not particularly bothered about that!

[I ask whether the machine would come with a hard drive as standard]

"Definitely, I can't see people wanting to use floppies any more, no, I think the machine would have to come with a hard drive, floppies are dying. That as a base level Amiga, if brought in at the same price as now, £399, would be a killer machine and I don't see any reason why it couldn't be done.

[I ask whether David feels that the current pricing is too high] "No, I think the current pricing for the whole package is about right. I appreciate Escom's reasons for doing it; they needed to come into what was obviously an insecure market, Commodore having been out of







Some of the superb output from Cinema 4D

it for 18 months. In a market which wasn't clearly defined, coming in with a cheap machine to try and take on the console market would have been the wrong way to approach the marketing of the machine in my view. The Amiga 1200 is not a console, it's not a games machine and it has never been put forward as such a machine; it's a home computer.

"People have only just started talking about home computers as more serious toys, if you like. People are actually talking about the reality of using a home computer for various subjects. CDs, for instance, have done a lot to firm up peoples' views of a home computer, and the A1200 is perfectly poised to fulfil all those requirements.

"No, I think the bundle is well-priced. I'm sure there are many people who would liked to have seen it cheaper and I think that companies in vertical markets would have liked to have seen a standalone machine but, at the end of the day, Escom have got to do what they think is right for the Amiga. They're the people who are enabling this computer and in my view we've got to support them and work with them and that's what I intend to do. I would want to see a PowerPC-based Amiga and HiSoft would be glad to make that move. In the end, we'll certainly stick with the Amiga for many years to come."

New product: Surf Squirrel



A follow-up to the phenomenally successful SCSI controller for the A1200, the Surf Squirrel gets it appellation from the fact that it also includes a high-speed serial port. The SCSI controller chip in the Surf Squirrel itself has been changed for a faster version, so you can now expect transfer rates of up to 3.2Mb/sec on an accelerated machine with at least 2Mb/sec on a standard A1200.

The design of the Squirrel remains similar, but the size of the casing has had to be enlarged to accommodate the extra circuitry required for the 9-pin serial port. The serial port will happily operate at speeds up to 115,200 baud (the standard Amiga port is only rated up to 38,400) and HiSoft have managed to push it to double that. Stand by for a serial network link, everyone! One of the disadvantages that everyone agreed on was the lack of autobooting on the original Squirrel. HiSoft have gone some way to eradicating this problem, although it can never be overcome entirely owing to the limitations of the PCMCIA port.

They have added a program that sits in memory, even when the machine has been soft rebooted and allows the Squirrel to autoboot.

Obviously, the program has to be run before this can happen, so when the machine is switched on the first time, a boot floppy has to be used. Thereafter, when the machine is reset using the Ctrl-Amiga-Amiga combination the Squirrel will autoboot.

ETA: November
Price: £99.95

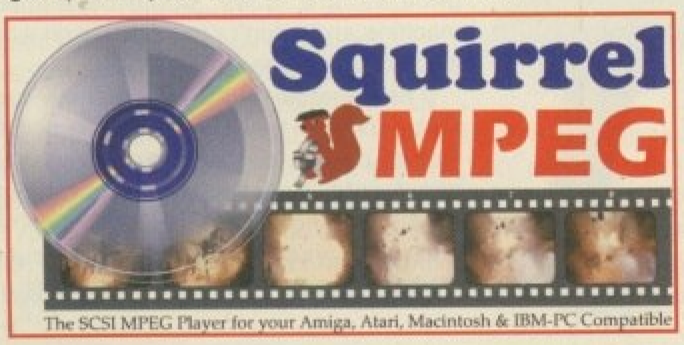
New product: Squirrel MPEG

This little box might well be HiSoft's biggest seller to date, when it finally hits the streets. The Squirrel Mpeg is an external case, much like the one your CD-ROM drive sits in, and it is designed to sit in your SCSI chain. What it does is take an Mpeg stream from CD, or any other suitable source, and play it back.

HiSoft are busy working on all the tools necessary to fast forward, rewind and so on, but even in its raw state, the Squirrel Mpeg provides a far superior picture to the best that the CDi's FMV cartridge can offer. Where the CDi's output has odd vertical lines down the screen as though it were on laid paper and definite artifacting on areas of almost-single colour, the Squirrel Mpeg is as silky smooth as a silky smooth thing.

The other great benefit to this box is the fact that it is not limited in which machine it can be used with. Because it sits externally in your SCSI chain, it means that any machine from the humble A600 to the mighty Draco can use it. HiSoft even showed me the Squirrel Mpeg unplugged from an Amiga and taken with a CD-ROM drive downstairs to the telly and plugged straight into it.

This means you will have a fairly portable, standalone VideoCD player for the same money as you paid to have a computer dependant Mpeg playback device. What's more, the Squirrel Mpeg will be supplied with a remote control device, so you won't even have to get up from your chair to fiddle with controls.



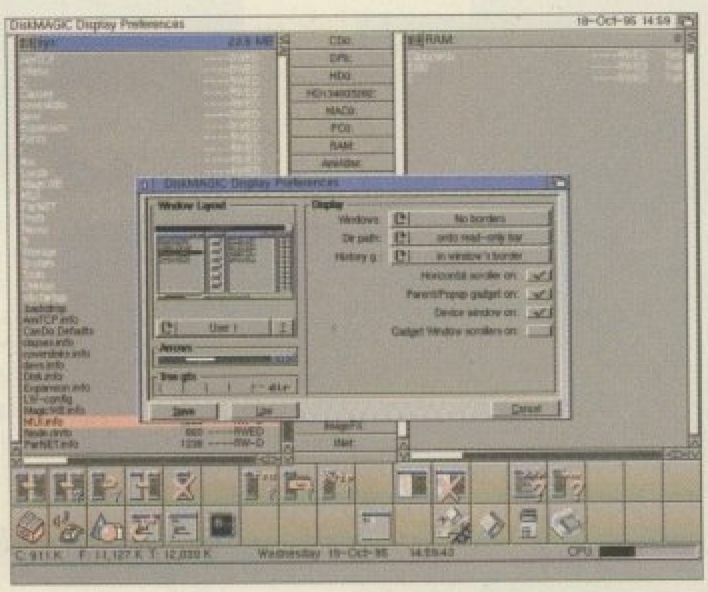
ETA: January 1996
Price: £199.95

New product: DiskMagic

We've already previewed DiskMagic in these hallowed pages (issue 90), but in case you missed it, here's the low down. DiskMagic is HiSoft's entry into the Amiga file manager market. It uses the same two window approach made familiar by Diskmaster, but is a lot more configurable than its distant ancestor.

One of DiskMagic's unique features is the fact that it treats archives as though they were directories. That is to say, should you have an Lha file on your hard drive, you can, in DiskMagic, double-click on it as though to extract it or enter a sub-directory and, after a mo, DiskMagic will display the contents of the archive just as if it *was* a sub-directory, with a list of the files which can then be copied into a destination directory. This comes in particularly handy when dealing with large archives from which you only need a file or two. DiskMagic is a powerful successor to the current crop of file managers and deserves to do well.

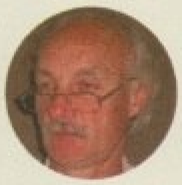
ETA: Now shipping **Price: £39.95**



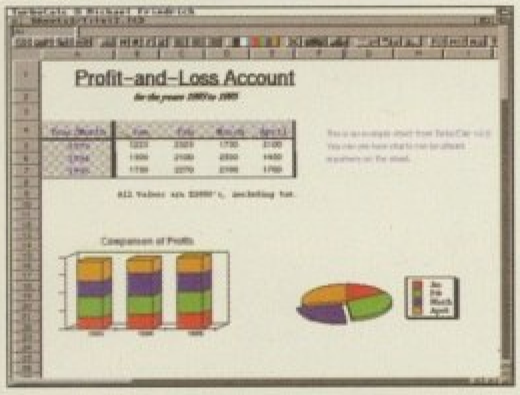
DiskMagic's flexibility means comprehensive preferences

Introducing the Digita® family

New! TurboCalc 3.5

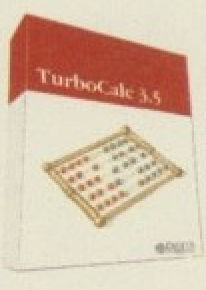


“I now understand why this remarkable software is so popular in Germany. Thank goodness Digita worked with TurboCalc's German creators to develop this English version. In a nutshell, a fast spreadsheet, at a friendly price and with a proven track record!”



Spreadsheets can be used for many forms of financial planning. Using TurboCalc, you can calculate and recalculate entire spreadsheets in seconds. And then, by selecting from a range of 2D or 3D styles, view your data as charts.

- Award-winning spreadsheet with over 52,000 users in Germany!
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- Multiple undo and redo.
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- On-line AmigaGuide help whenever you need, so you can learn Turbocalc as you use it.
- Over 100 built-in mathematical and financial functions.
- Extensive ARexx and macro support.
- Low price upgrade! Call for details.
- Requires Workbench 1.3 or above, floppy or hard disk, 1MB RAM.



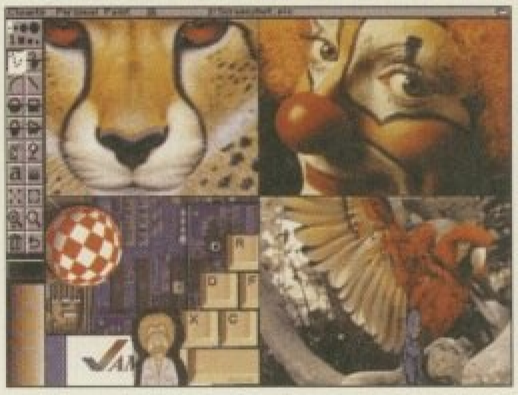
£49.99
Add £3 postage and packaging

New! Personal Paint 6.4



“This is the only choice, the only Amiga paint program that does everything—painting, image processing, animation and 24-bit printing—there is no other choice for a computer artist!”

Painting has never been so liberated! Personal Paint's unique virtual memory facility uses free disk space to supplement RAM, and in doing so, relieves memory constraints.



And with its unequalled support for third party graphics cards, you can create fabulous images no matter what Amiga you use.

- Stunning effects like emboss, water-colours, transparencies and stereograms.
- Full range of drawing and colouring tools, with the ability to store up to 9 brushes.
- Animation storyboard.
- Virtual memory, uses free disk space to supplement RAM.
- Wide compatibility with third party graphics cards.
- Import and export IFF, PCX, PNG
- Multiple undo and redo.
- Built-in screen grabber.
- Low price upgrade! Call for details.
- Requires Workbench 2 or above, floppy or hard disk, 1MB RAM.



£49.99
Add £3 postage and packaging

New! Datastore 2

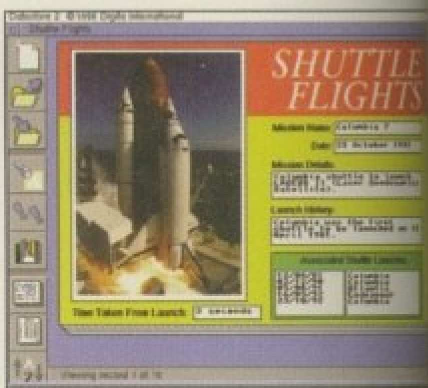


“Friendly. That's how I'd sum up Datastore. There are so many helpful features, like DigiSense for example—it knows what I want to type and helps me type it! Time-saving features like that make all the difference.”

Datastore makes storing information simple. Ready-made EasyStart™ templates means that you don't have to design your own database layouts. And, the wide range of automated data entry facilities ensures that you type as little as possible.

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- Quickly and simply print labels (using Wordworth).
- On-line AmigaGuide help whenever you need.
- Share information with Organiser, Personal Paint, Turbocalc and Wordworth.
- Low price upgrade! Call for details.
- Requires Workbench 2 or above, floppy or hard disk, 1MB RAM.

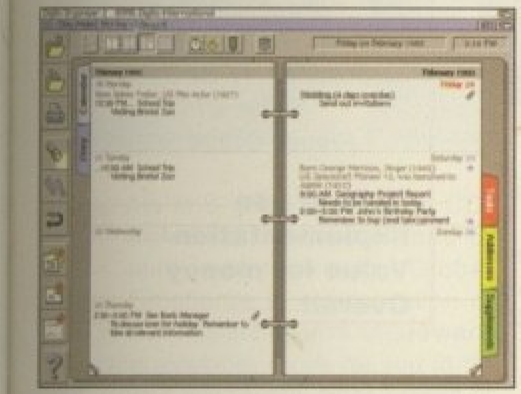


£49.99
Add £3 postage and packaging

New! Organiser 2



"I wished I'd bought the Digita Organiser earlier. Imagine, an organiser which looks and works just like the real thing! Now, I never forget birthdays or bills, and I really plan my time effectively. I've learnt a lot too with the Diary Themes and Supplements."



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- Prints pages for Day-Timer, Filofax, Rolodex, Time Manager.
- Mailmerge with Wordworth to create personalised form letters.
- Manual and automatic linking of related items.
- On-line AmigaGuide help whenever you need, so you can learn Organiser as you use it.
- Share information with Datastore and Wordworth.
- Low price upgrade! Call for details.
- Requires Workbench 2 or above, floppy or hard disk, 1MB RAM.



£49.99
Add £3 postage and packaging

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Organiser **96** *Plus Pack*

Diary Themes:
Astronomy, Born On This Day, Celebrity Birthdays, Died On This Day, Disasters, Discoveries, Famous Battles, Firsts, Historical Days, Sporting Events, Trivia, 9 Religious Calendars, and more.

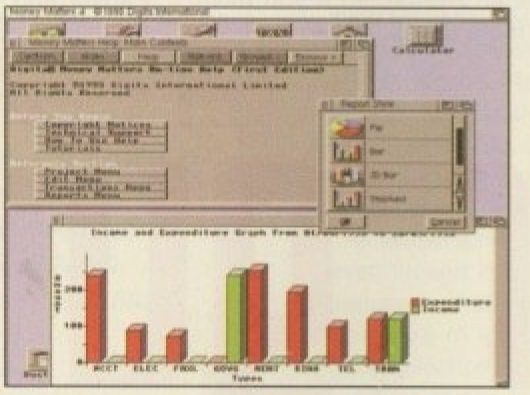
Supplements:
Animals, Art, Astrology Astronomy, Award Winners, Born On This Day, Computers, Culture Events, Died On This Day, Disasters, Discoveries, Famous Battles, Firsts, Gardening, Health, History, Home Hints, Hotels, Internet, Measurement Units, Movie Classics, Music Milestones, National Country Days, Olympics (past and Atlanta 96), Our Planet, Recipes, Registered Charities, Religions, Restaurants, Sport, Telephone Dialling Codes, Travelling, Radio Stations, Social Season Events, Theatre, Telephone Numbers, Useful Addresses, Wine Guide and more.

New! Money Matters 4



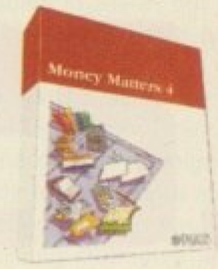
"I dreaded working out my finances at the end of the month. I always seemed to end up owing more than I had left over. In fact, my finances were a bit of a muddle and a lot of hassle.

But not anymore, now that I use Money Matters. I know exactly what I owe, I am able to make sound financial decisions and plan for the future. Best of all, the savings in bank and credit card charges covered the cost of Money Matters in just a few months!"



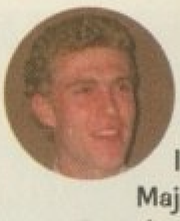
Use the power of your Amiga to do the work for you! Instantly see what you spend the most on, how this compares to last month, last year, or to your budget—it's effortless!

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- Requires Workbench 2 or above, floppy or hard disk, 1MB RAM.



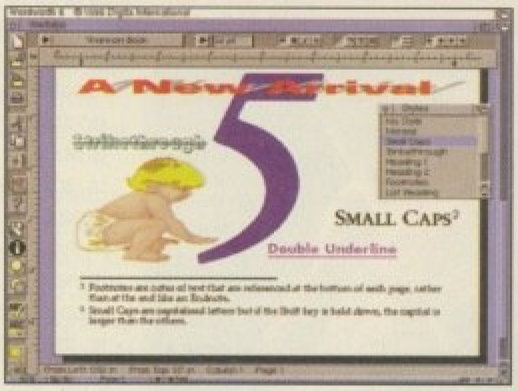
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Wordworth News–the new arrival



"I have made some very nerve wracking decisions in my lifetime—joining Her Majesties Forces—Parachuting—volunteering for near impossible things—but one of the best decisions I have ever made was to buy Wordworth!"

When Amiga Technologies wanted the best word processor, it demanded Digita Wordworth—the best-selling Amiga word processor in the world. Wordworth 4SE, created in English, German, French and Italian, is now included with every Amiga. So, then, the world's most popular word processor becomes even more popular!



Existing Wordworth users can now look forward to Wordworth 5, and, provided you're registered, you'll receive full upgrade details in November. New features include ARexx, Fast Format,™ FontEffects,™ footnotes, style sheets and much more. Best of all, the upgrade costs just £29.99!

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17 Bit The Fifth Dimension



Carrying on with their tradition of putting their entire PD collection onto CD, this is 17 Bit's fifth bumper CD. Access to all the files on the disc is through an Aminet-style AmigaGuide which has got to be the best way of organising such an index, and makes finding any file very straightforward.

In 17 Bit's case, all their disks have been categorised into a number of sections, with a separate specific AGA section. One interesting point is that there are only three ECS demos compared to the very large selection of AGA demos. Time for all you demo freaks to upgrade to an A1200 I think.

As usual, all the files are in the DMS format, so if you want to extract a large number of disks it is going to take a long time. One plus point is that you can choose the destination device, so if you have two or more drives, or use the FMS device, at least you can take advantage of this fact.



This is just one of the excellent games to be found

For anyone who needs them, ParNet and SerNet are also available and ready to run on the CD. As usual this is up to 17 Bit's high standards, with the contents managing to cover every aspect of Amiga public domain, therefore appealing to every Amiga owner.

The bottom line

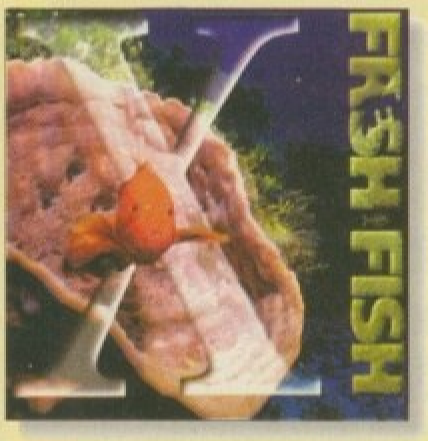
Product: 17 Bit The Fifth Dimension
Supplier: 17 Bit Software
Price: £19.99
Phone: 01924 366982

Ease of use	8
Implementation	9
Value for money	8
Overall	8

laser guidance

Neil Mohr takes a look at some CDs that might be filling a few stockings this Christmas

Fresh Fish X



Fred Fish is one of those Amiga institutions you just do not seem to find anywhere else. Lord knows how long he has been putting compilation disks together, but the huge amounts of programs he was dealing with made the inevitable move to CD a necessity.

The Fresh Fish CDs provide you with a large selection of 'serious' ready-to-run Amiga software, as opposed to the Frozen Fish CDs which are designed for BBS use, and have everything archived.

The bulk of the software is organised into the same directory hierarchy as Aminet, making locating a specific type of program a doddle. However, if you have any problems finding a program, AKwick is available, or an AmigaGuide index for you to peruse.

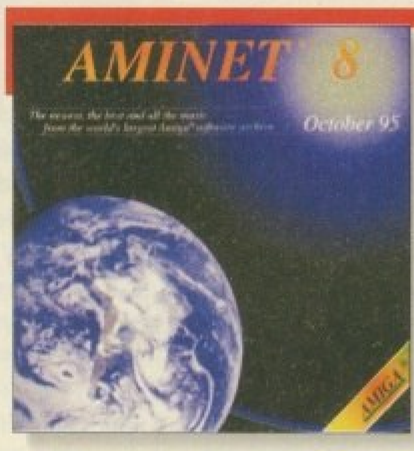
As I mentioned, this CD is really aimed at the serious user because along with the normal utilities there is the full, ready-to-run distribution of all the Amiga Ports of the various GNU programs. You can also find the full Commodore developer include files for version 37,39 and 40 of AmigaDOS. Another excellent CD aimed for the more serious Amiga user.

The bottom line

Product: Fresh Fish X
Supplier: PD Soft
Price: £19.99
Phone: 01702 466933

Ease of use	8
Implementation	8
Value for money	8
Overall	8

Aminet 8



All you Amiga owners out there, stop uploading stuff to Aminet – I cannot review these things quick enough. I review one and before I have had time to take a breath, another 600Mb of programs have appeared on a new Aminet disc. This latest incarnation boasts well over 3400 files, with only 35Mb of old files and programmes remaining over from the last Aminet disc – and I bet a large chunk of that is contained in the old AmigaGuide index files.

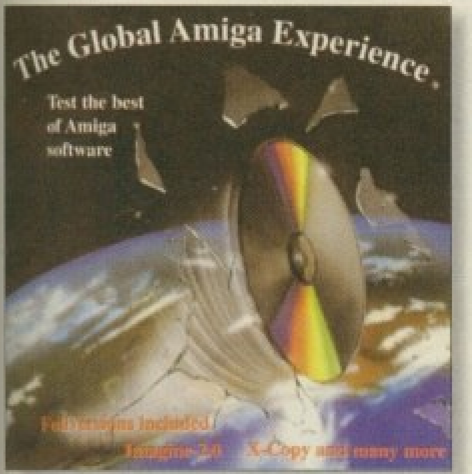
As with each Aminet CD there is a specialist topic. This CD happens to concentrate on modules, with 2000 of the things inhabiting the CD. One of the new features of the disc is that a special version of DeliTracker is used to play all the different module types. This provides a good standard interface for listening to all those tasty modules, because DeliTracker is one of the best players out there. If you want something different from the usual hard-core, acid, rave modules, check out the excellent jazz/funk section.

The bottom line

Product: Aminet 8
Supplier: 17 Bit Software
Price: £14.99
Phone: 01924 366982

Ease of use	8
Implementation	9
Value for money	9
Overall	9

The Global Amiga Experience



This is a good idea for a CD. Instead of the usual picture or utility collections, the Global Amiga Experience is a compilation of the best commercial and shareware programs available, ready for you to try out. When I say try out, what I mean is there are demos of commercial programs. Well, this is not quite true as there are full versions of Imagine 2, Scala 1.13, VistaPro 1, Distant Suns 4, Clarissa 1.1, Edge 1.72 and X-Copy. This is quite a lot of stuff for you to use, and included are upgrade discounts for these programs.

All the programs are grouped into what sort of type they are – databases, comms, programming, DTP, raytracing, video, painting, imagepro, cad, anims and music. Just a small selection of the programs you can try out are HeliOS, Blitz Basic, CanDo, WordsWorth, Pagestream, ProWrite, TurboText, SuperJam, Octamed 6, DeluxeMusic 2. This is not to mention the huge number of available graphics programs

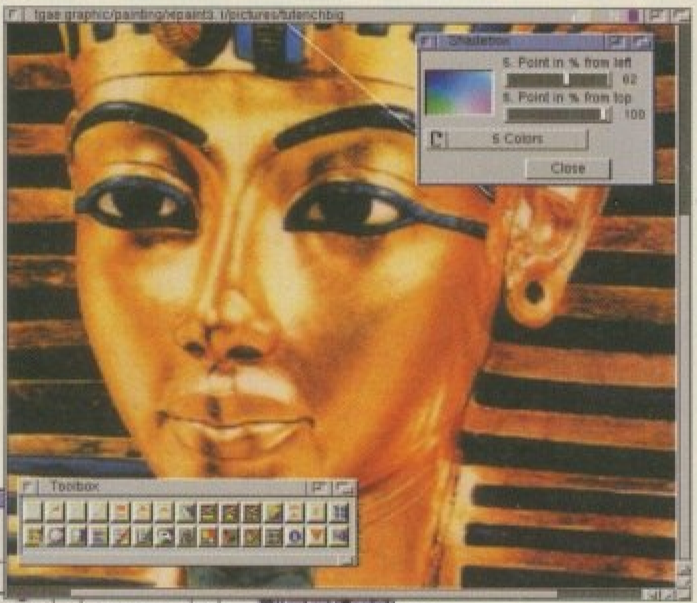
This is a great CD. Straightforward Workbench organisation makes it easy to find whatever program you are looking for, and icons are available that set up any necessary fonts or assigns for a program to run. Therefore, there is no hassle in getting to use programs. If you want to try out some of the best commercial Amiga programs then this CD will defiantly be of great interest to you.
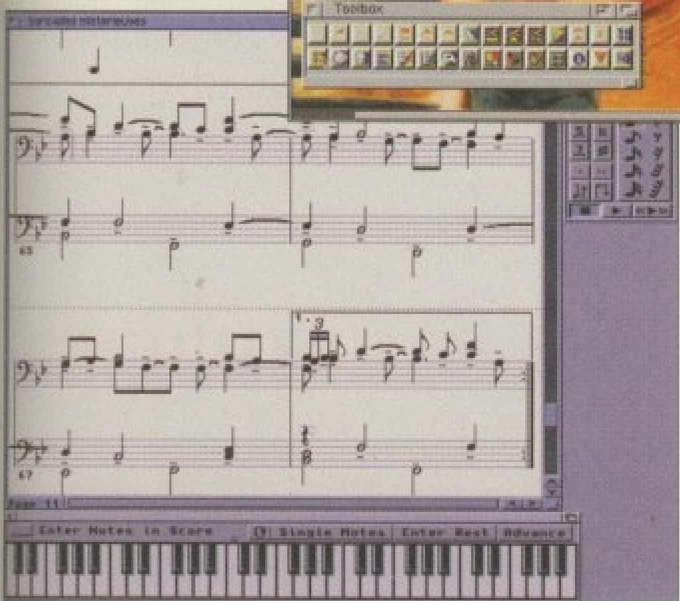
The bottom line

Product: The Global Amiga Experience
Supplier: PD Soft
Price: £24.99
Phone: 01702 466933

Ease of use	**9**
Implementation	**9**
Value for money	**9**
Overall	**9**

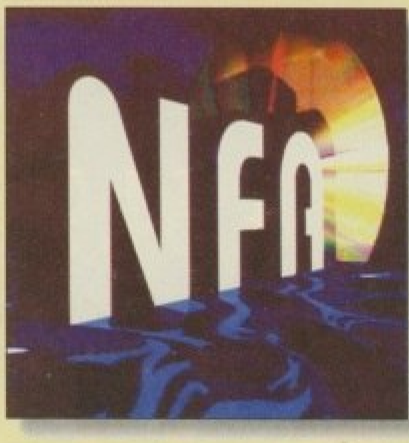
Every area of Amiga programs are covered, from graphics...





...to music – you can find them all here

AGA Experience Vol. 1



Finally, a CD dedicated to AGA users. When you first open this CD's icon you are presented with a very nice selection of MagicWB icons, each directory category having a very nice MagicWB image corresponding to whatever is in there.

Pretty much every area of Amiga PD is covered here, from Eric Schwartz's Morphy the Magician to a large collection of AGA demos. If you have collected any of the PD AGA slide shows that have been dished out by the boat load, you couldn't have missed one of the NFA produced ones – the notorious BodyShop series springs to mind for some reason. Well, as NFA put this CD together there are, of course, a few slide shows, and other exclusive NFA productions.

Pulp Fiction, Reservoir Dogs, Big Girls Special and a raytracing slide show all make an appearance. As you may have guessed, Big Girl Special has a few bare breasted ladies in there, but it does seem strange that they bothered at all because there are only about ten pictures.

A reasonable selection of games and demos are ready to run, even though many will not run straight off an A4000. One unusual feature is that demos or the full versions of every Amiga Doom clone are in the games section, all ready to run. There is also a good selection of utilities, all of which are also ready to run.

Other things include various programming examples and programmer-type stuff. The last year's worth of Amiga reports are also included which are always good reading, along with other electronic Amiga magazines.

Along with the ready-to-run programs, you can find a lot of extra archived material in most of the directories, with demos included, as many of these need to be run off their own floppy. Luckily, all these files have icons with them, that are set up to unDMS the files onto disk for you.

Overall, this a reasonable disc. It is completely full, so has plenty on it for you to play around with. Any problems with running these demos ,or games is not the fault of the person who put the CD together as the use of the MagicWB icons and the good layout makes the CD very nice and easy to use.

The bottom line

Product: AGA Experience Vol. 1
Supplier: SAdENESS
Price:£19.99
Phone: 01263 722169

Ease of use	**9**
Implementation	**8**
Value for money	**8**
Overall	**8**



Caption required

Connect and conquer

Bringing two machines together has never been easy. Paul Austin tries the Flexi-Link approach to the problem

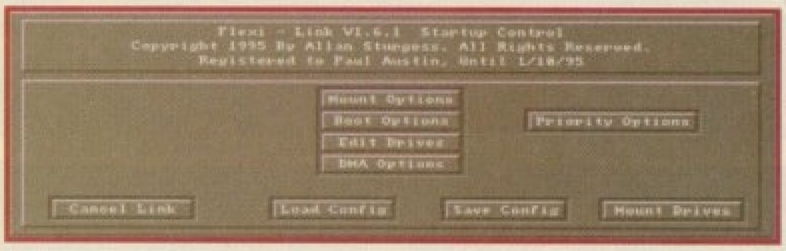
Creating a dirt cheap local area network between two Amigas can hardly be described as a unique concept. Numerous attempts have been made with varying degrees of success, most notably being the Parnet approach. Like Flexi-Link the Parnet system employs a custom parallel cable which delivers roughly 40k per second in ideal conditions, with somewhere between 20/30k more often the norm on most systems.

On the plus side, Parnet is Freeware and hence completely gratis. All you need is the software, a soldering iron, and the necessary odds and ends courtesy of Maplins to construct the cable. On the downside, fiddling with cabling and soldering irons is never as straightforward as it looks on paper. In addition, the actual software is relatively basic and fairly slow in comparison with the Flexi-link alternative.

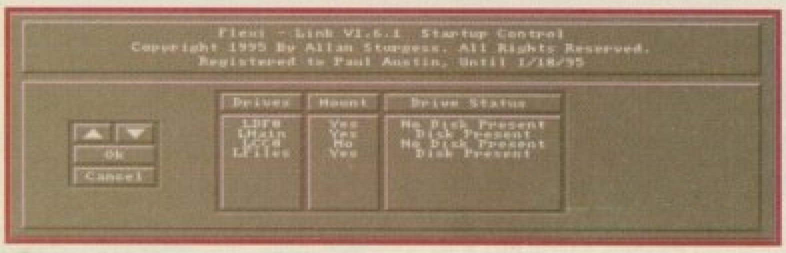
Once a Parnet link is established between the two machines, a network folder is created containing the various items that have been mounted from the remote machine. Remote volumes such as floppies appear as drawers, and although it doesn't automatically support items which have been left out on the remote machine, it's still possible to leave them out manually. Crude but effective.

Now you're aware of the ultra cheap alternative, it's time to put the slightly more expensive Flexi-Link option to the test. Needless to say, speed is at the heart of any network and in this area, Flexi-Link scores well with an average transfer delivering between 50/60k per second.

In real terms this means a 1Mb file will traverse the net – using the standard Workbench drag and drop technique – in approximately 20 seconds. Quite respectable considering the asking price. If that's still not fast enough you can opt for the Turbo mode. As the name suggests, this dramatically increases transfer to between 80/90k per second.



All you need to set-up, load and save your configs

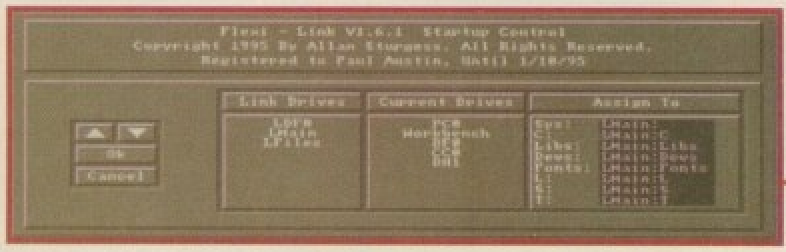


Point and click mount selections. Your choice to decide what will appear onscreen from the remote

Needless to say, there is a downside which takes the form of screen blanking on both machines. However, if you have a large amount of data to transfer and can live with the inconvenience of the blanking, it provides the fastest cable connection transfer available.

Improved basic transfer of between 20/30k per second may not be enough to tempt too many people away from its PD alternative. Fortunately for Flexi-Link, there's a lot more to effective networking that raw speed. Unlike its counterpart, Flexi-Link does support icons that have been left out on the desktop including both floppies and hard drives – which appear in their original form on the remote machine. Better still, volumes from the remote machine are treated as if they're actually hard wired to the host. As a result, you can even format a remote floppy or hard drive when the need arises.

A nice touch is the auto assigning of directories between the linked machines. Any commands not found on the host machine will automatically be searched for on the remote. End result – seamless file sharing and assignment requiring in minimal duplication of system resources. Why have two copies of a program or directory you only need once in a blue moon? AC



Automatic assigns from one machine to the other

Whistles and bells

Aside from the basic and Turbo transfer modes, Flexi-Link also ships with an nice collection of utils. A simple Speed Test util reveals all in reference to transfer speeds between the two machines. Another excellent addition is Flexi_execute, a program which allows you to run software on one machine from its partner in crime.

On a lighter note, the Flexi-Link package also ships with Naughts & Crosses and a battleships clone entitled Flexi-Ships. There's the curious addition of a mouse sharing utility, so you can use a remote mouse – quite when this would prove a necessity is a mystery, but it's there if need arises.

Back on a more serious note, Flexi-Link also supports Ami-FileSafe for those who take their OS and file storage seriously. However, the makers of Flexi-Link do recommended you contact them prior to purchase to ensure the version of Ami-File-Safe you're using is fully compatible.

No competition

The big question is, should you stick with Parnet or opt for Flexi-Link? In my opinion there's no contest. When you've bought the necessary cabling and gone through the hassle of soldering it all together to construct a Parnet cable, £30 for Flexi-Link is too good to miss.

Apart from the ease of use, Flexi- Link offers a whole host of fairly advanced features which Parnet simply can't match – fully implemented file and hardware sharing being the most notable.

As you can probably see, courtesy of the screen shots, user defined set-up is extremely well catered for with various options for customising which volumes are mounted and how they're accessed via the remote machine.

My only complaint is that the software does not allow you to shut down and restart the network, or alter your initial configuration via a commodity. Leave this minor knit picking aside and you arrive at one of the cheapest and best ways to bring two Amigas together.

SYSTEM ESSENTIALS

RED = Essential **BLACK** = Recommended



The bottom line

Product: Flexi-link
Price: £30
Tel: 01452 306252

Ease of use	**9**
Implementation	**7**
Value for money	**9**
Overall	**8**



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* 1 Year Warranty

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* MONO Inkjet printer & Prints over 3ppm.
* Built-in 'smoothing' function giving an effective 720 x 360 dpi
* Incorporated easy to use LCD control panel & a warning to let the user know when the cartridge is running short of ink.
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* Prints up to 4ppm – using the high performance cartridge
* 360 dpi for colour printing and an effective 720 x 360 dpi mono
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* 1 Year Warranty

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* Built-in 'smoothing' function giving an effective 720 x 360 dpi for mono print
* Improved logic capabilities allows you to print colour graphics at a speed of 0.6-1.2 ppm.
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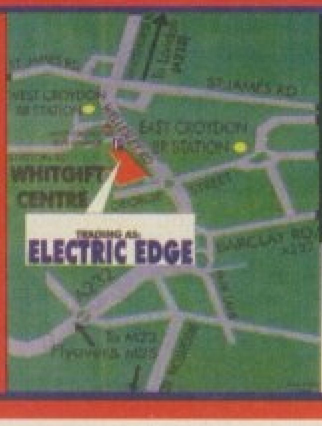
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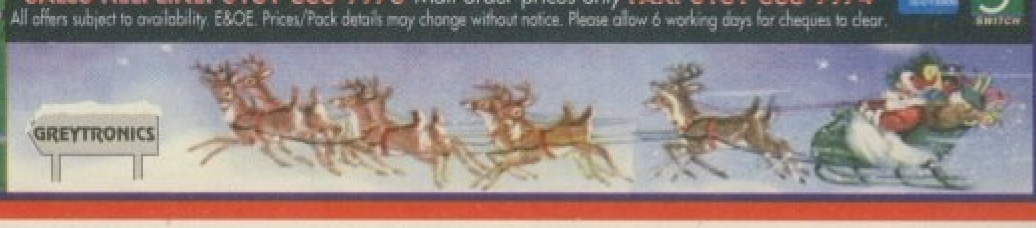


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Fractal landscape generation was one of the 3D tools that made the Amiga great before any of the other popular platforms were really powerful enough to do it. Vista Pro and Scenery Animator were responsible for making people know what the acronyms USGS and DEM actually stood for, a feat only previously available to cartographers and geologists. Vista Pro and Scenery Animator seem to have faded somewhat into obscurity, but there's no excuse not to keep up with your erraforming tasks now that World Construction Set is here.

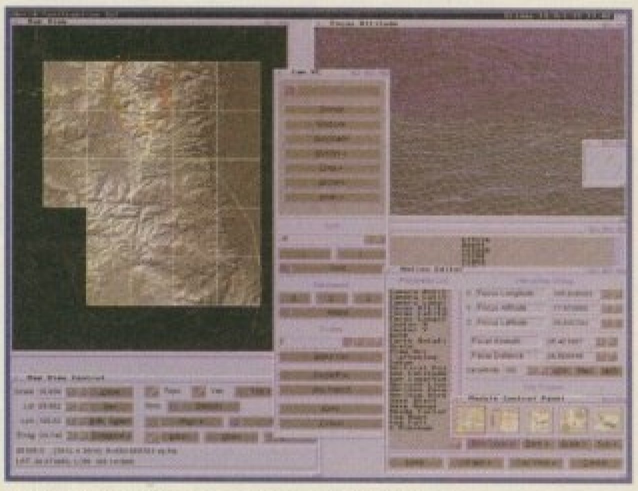
WCS is not that new to the Amiga, but we haven't reviewed it before and with a new version coming out after Christmas, it looked like a good time to be reviewing the current version. As it stands, World Construction Set arrives in a hefty box containing five disks and a very meaty manual indeed. Weighing in at over 650 pages, this is one tome that really couldn't be ring bound. The manual is very well written with a light tone that conceals some of the more complex topics that it covers. You never feel like you are trawling through some turgid textual treatise.

FORMAT

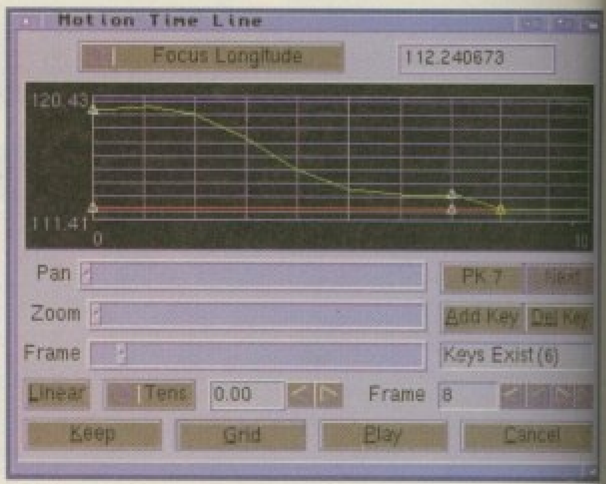
As for its organisation, it isn't too bad at all. There's a well-specified index and the tutorials are near the front, with reference material at the back. All the eco-, geo- and cartological terms (yes, alright. I know 'cartological' isn't a real word, but it did make a nice piece of text. How about Photo-, Geo- and Cartographical instead) are very well explained in layman's terms.

The software itself is easy enough to install using the standard installer process. Once you have installed World Construction Set and double-clicked for the first time on its icon, you will be presented with a window asking for a screen mode. World Construction Set works in any screen mode including those offered by graphics cards and opens a 16 colour screen. Once World Construction Set has opened its screen, you'll only be presented with a five tool button bar which takes up very little monitor real estate. Time to open some windows, I think.

The odd thing about World Construction Set is the fact that you could render a whole scene without ever looking at a map or camera view of what you will be render-



Very large landscapes are possible in WCS, even in the minimum recommended RAM



WCS's features are reminiscent of LightWave's

I second that motion

World Construction Set's motion paths can be slightly awkward to manipulate, but if you have LightWave handy you can always use Layout motion paths from that program in World Construction Set. The same is true the other way, which means you can match up your camera's paths in both programs and arrange your animation for easy composition.

World Construction Set also supports proper Z buffering, LightWave doesn't yet, which can be used to ensure that things that ought to be behind hills stay behind hills. A Z buffer is a bit like an alpha channel in that it is a greyscale pseudo-representation of your colour artwork, but instead of each shade of grey representing a different level of transparency, each grey in a Z buffer indicates a different distance from the camera, with darker shades moving progressively further from the lens.

You can still use the Z buffer image that World Construction Set creates in LightWave, it'll just take more work. Because you know that each grey is a different distance, the first thing to do is run the Z buffer image through an image processor of some sort. Select each of the level of grey in turn and create a new image just containing that particular level of grey which should then be brightened until it is pure white.

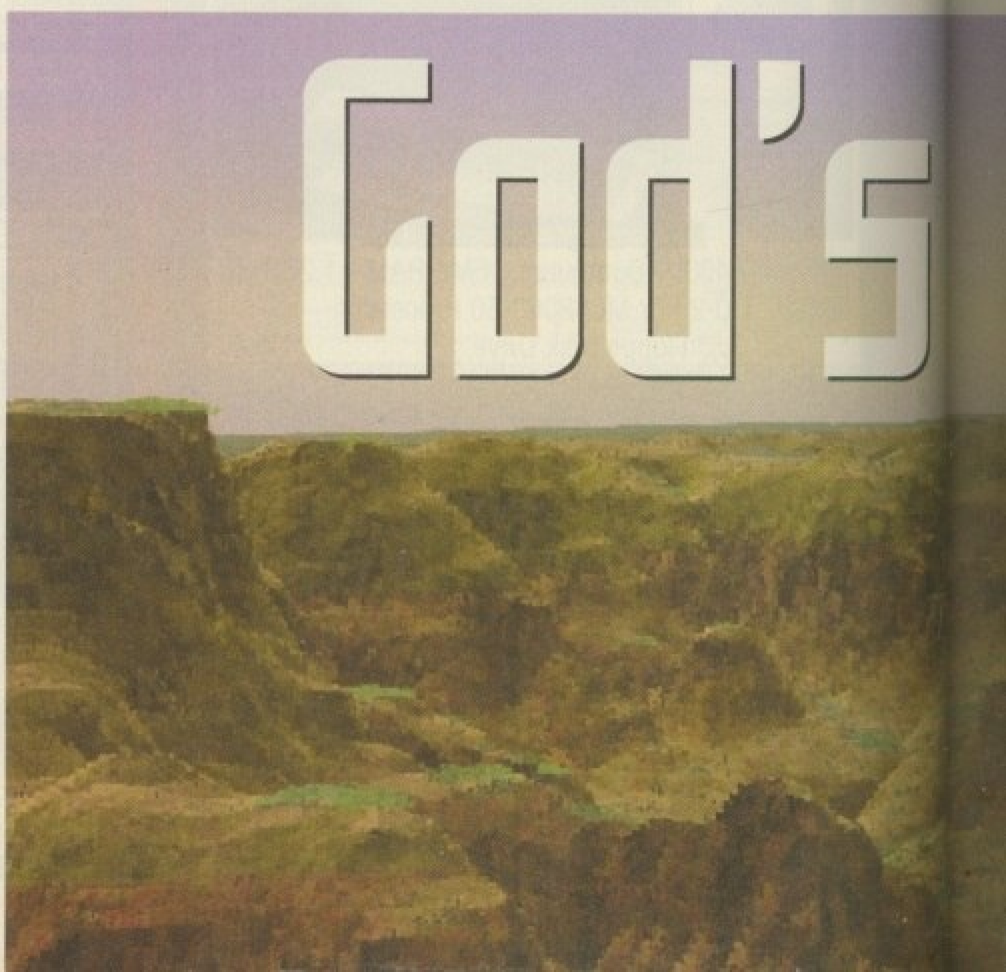
Then you will need to save out each of the new images with a suitable extension; 1.2km.iff would be one idea for a plane of grey that is 1.2 kilometres from the camera. Once you have done this, you will need to set them up in LightWave as clip-mapped, single polygon rectangles, front projection mapped with the colour image, at the appropriate distance from the camera.

MUI whoey?

World Construction Set uses MUI, otherwise known as Magic User Interface, as the basis for its GUI. MUI is provided with the package, but if you are a regular reader of *Amiga Computing*, you'll remember that we put a full copy of MUI on our CoverDisk back in July 1995. Without it, although you'll still be able to make full use of World Construction Set, you won't be able to change the way World Construction Set looks, or, at least, save those changes.

More and more shareware programs use MUI as their basis, but World Construction Set is the first commercial application (that I know of anyway) to make use of this handy interface tool. Stefan Stuntz, the author of MUI, has promised a new version will be ready by the time you read this with even more features and hopefully more speed.

The Grand Canyon as seen from WCS's camera



ing. This definitely feels contrary to the GUI principle, but comes in very handy if you are only running World Construction Set on a low resolution screen. In fact, even on a screen measuring 1024 x 768 there isn't enough room to have all the windows World Construction Set produces open at the same time.

So, anyway, we've now opened the most important two windows in World Construction Set; the map view and the camera view. These two are where you'll spend most of your time, tweaking the way your landscape looks, but you can't open them on their own. As soon as you open the map view, the necessary Map View Control window also appears. And to get the camera view up and running, you'll need to open the Parameter Module window, open the Motion Editor window from that and then open the Camera view window from there!

WINDOW VIEW

It doesn't stop here though folks. Once you've clicked on the camera view button at the bottom of the Motion Editor window, two further windows will appear in addition to the camera view. These are a fairly redundant compass (redundant unless you don't have the map view open, that is) and a further list of settings pertaining to the camera view. Phew!

All these windows don't stop World Construction Set from being a joy to use - just make sure you are running a commodity that allows you to click on any part of a window to bring it to the front like the one supplied with Workbench or MultiCX. Then you won't have to worry about anything other than the aesthetics of windows overlapping one another.

World Construction Set is definitely a complex package, and one that can get a bit complicated and unfriendly at times, but in the same way as Imagine, this is only because of the vast array of options open to the user. Unlike Imagine, however, World Construction Set is presented with a logical interface that has a bit of panache. It's also friendly towards graphics cards, unlike the aforementioned program.

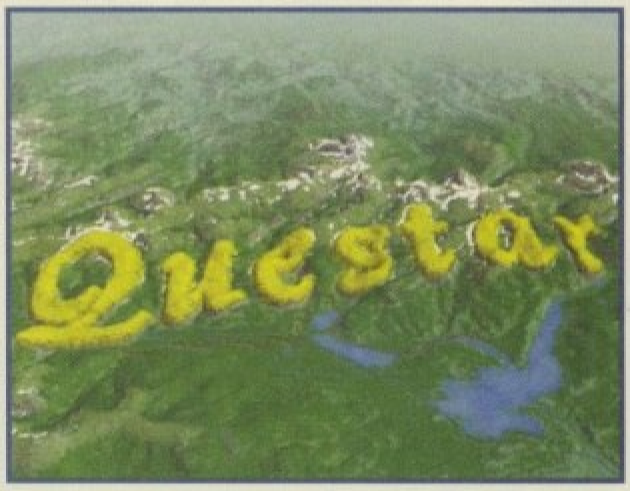
Some of its features do need a little reworking to make them top notch though. For instance, if your program is going to work with LightWave, it's probably a good idea to try to conform to some of the ways LightWave works. The particular example I am thinking of is the Arc view setting in World Construction Set. This is equivalent to the Camera Lens setting in LightWave, yet the two share little similarity. You'll need to experiment before you will be able to match the two to your tastes. A simple change to World Construction Set, or even a table in the manual indicating the conversion between the two would be enough to cheer me up no end.

And the word was...

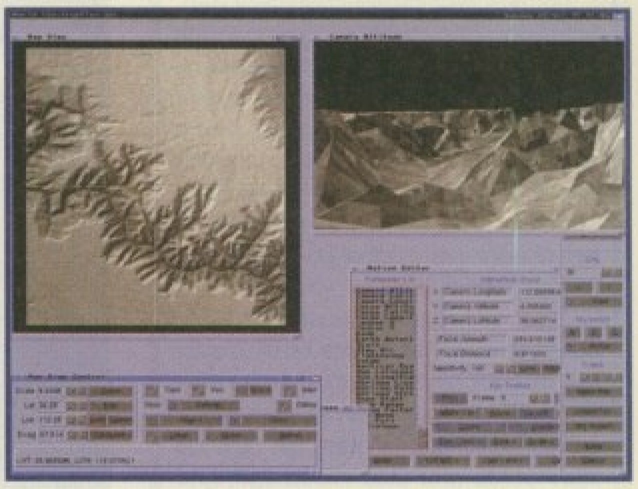
World Construction Set is a fine program. It can be a little complicated and unintuitive to get into at first, but the learning curve isn't too steep. Once you have grasped the basics, you'll soon find yourself thinking of all the possibilities it offers and that you could achieve given enough time and patience.

The renderer isn't as fast (in my subjective opinion) as VistaPro's and it doesn't yet offer reflective water or clouds. However, given its superb compatibility with LightWave, the clouds shouldn't pose too much of a problem. I would like to see more example DEMs with the product in future, perhaps distribution on CD or at least with a CD would be a possibility.

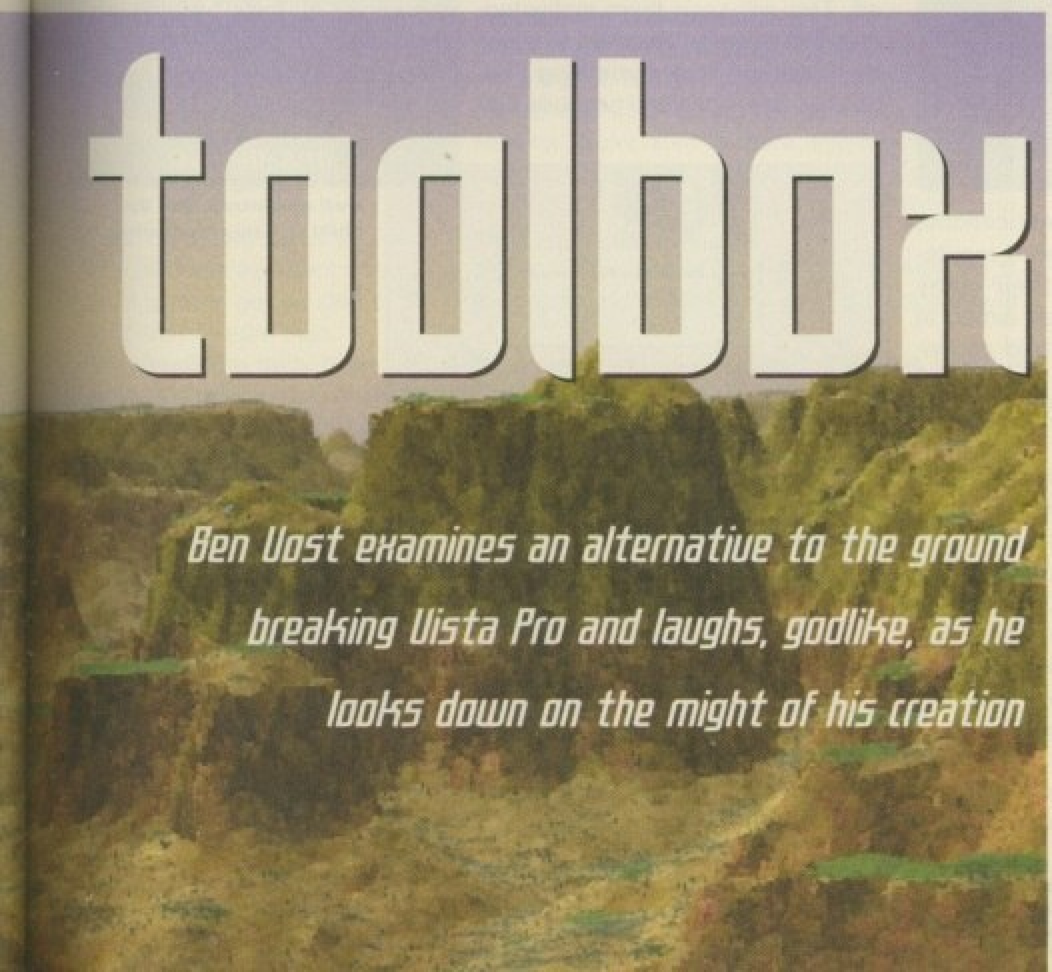
Finally, if you have even the slightest interest in geology, geography, ecology or even political history and you teach these subjects, then World Construction Set will be an invaluable tool if you are willing to put in the hours. If you don't have the slightest educational bent, other fractal landscape packages are cheaper, but World Construction Set beats them all hands down for features.



Mapping a logo to a terrain is easily done in WCS



These six windows are the bare minimum you need open for working on your landscape



toolbox

Ben Vost examines an alternative to the ground breaking Vista Pro and laughs, godlike, as he looks down on the might of his creation

SYSTEM ESSENTIALS

RED = Essential **BLACK** = Recommended

- 2.04 Workbench
- 4 Mb RAM
- Hard drive
- 68040
- 8 Mb RAM or above
- RTG card

The bottom line

Product: World Construction Set
Supplier: Blittersoft
Price: £119.95
Tel: 01908 261466

Ease of use	**6**
Implementation	**9**
Value for money	**8**
Overall	**8**

Electronic



Tina Hackett and Andy Maddock review the best educational packages available for the child prodigy

Product: Fun School Spelling, Europress
Age Range: 7 to 16

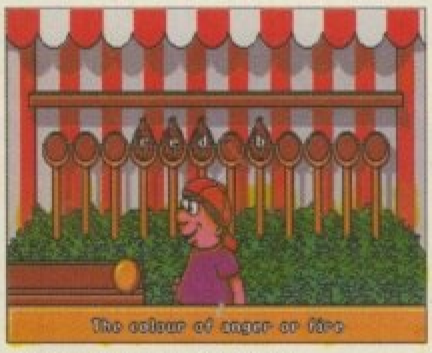
Supplier: Special Reserve
Price: £25.99
Phone: 01279 600204
Overall: 7/10

Europress's spelling package provides six exercises themed around a fairground. It is designed for children to practice around 4,000 commonly misspelt words in a variety of different exercises.

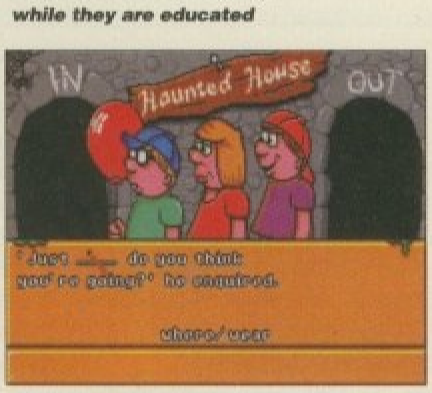
Games include Mechanical Grab, where a child must recognise words such as choosing the correct ending, or Haunted House, where the player has to deal with homophones, and it also allows the parent or teacher to add their own words. Furthermore, a special databank has been provided for children with dyslexia and mild learning difficulties.

One exercise sets the child a crossword to complete, which can be quite challenging due to the nature of the clues. However, it's a great way in letting them get to grips with words and their meanings, and disguises learning as a fun game. This is true of the other exercises too, and for the younger player, there is always some incentive for their persistence – a good ploy with educational packages.

It's all very nicely presented with colourful graphics and cheery music, though I doubt it would really stretch its appeal to the 16-year old. However, for the 7 to 12-year old it will work very well, with a user-friendly interface and useful activities to try.



Appealing presentation will keep the child entertained while they are educated



The exercises teach the common problems of spelling well

Product: Essential Science 10 out of 10
Age range: 5 to 12

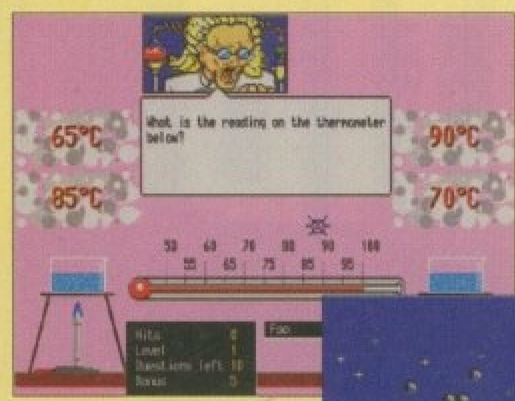
Supplier: 10 out of 10
Price: £25.95
Phone: 0113 239 4627
Overall: 6/10

The 10 out of 10 educational series have earned a reputation for quality with their many titles. Essential Science, aimed at the five to twelve-year old continues the series, with six games designed to teach the rudiments of Science.

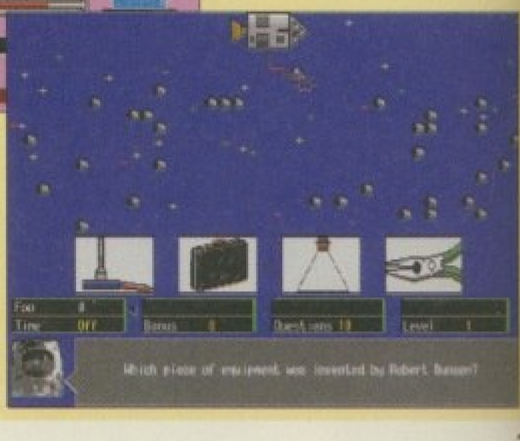
Despite the very basic graphics and presentation, there are some quite challenging exercises for the younger player. One is Steamer, a game which introduces the child to measuring activities. Another is Spectrum which provides scientific facts in an interesting way, such as the identification of parts of the body or a flower.

The parents can keep a check on the child's progress with a colour coding system and the player can also print out a certificate for each section correctly completed. This will keep them motivated and give them an incentive to play. It's fortunate that something like this has been included because the graphics and sound effects will do little to amuse them.

Overall, the majority of activities serve their purpose well, it's just a shame that more attention hasn't been paid into making the package more attractive.



The Steamer activity works well and introduces the child to basic measuring



This exercise gets the player to identify certain objects

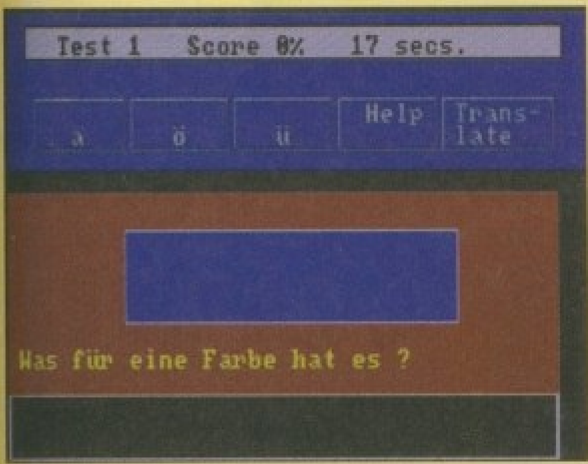
examination

Product: Micro German LCL
Age Range: N/A (GCSE)
Supplier: LCL
Price: £24.99
Phone: 01491 579345
Overall: 5/10

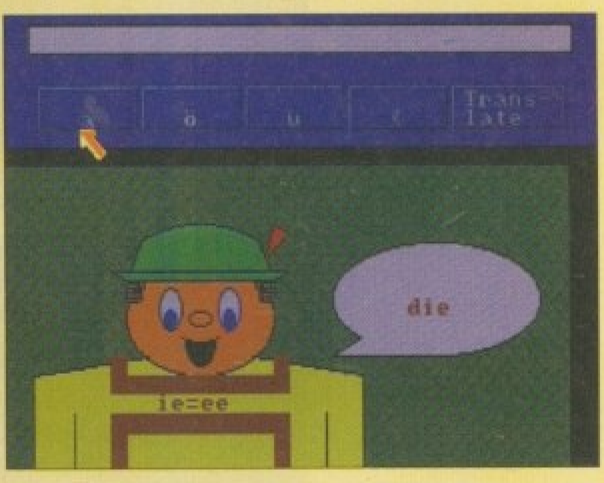
LCL's Micro German aims to take the novice language learner right through to GCSE. It has 24 programs which cover written and spoken German and prepares the user for the oral and written exam. As well as suiting the school learner, it is also tailored for the businessman as it generates business letters, and it also covers verbs and grammar.

LCL used to include a tape with their language package but now they have incorporated speech into the actual program. Although this does sound rather robotic, it does work quite well in giving the user an idea of the correct pronunciation.

Overall, the content of the package is quite commendable with all necessary aspects covered. However, it's the actual presentation which lets the package down. The interface looks unpleasant and is not intuitive to use, and this is likely to frustrate, especially in a title like this where the user should be able to concentrate solely on the learning and not how to make the thing actually work. It also looks extremely dated and is hardly likely to make 'street-cred' conscious teenagers want to use it.



The interface isn't easy to use and looks dated



The exercises work well but graphically it won't astound

Product: 10 out of 10 German
Age Range: 8-16
Supplier: 10 out of 10
Price: £25.95
Phone: 0113 239 4627
Overall: 8/10

This German package includes six games which children aged 8 to 16 studying attainment targets 3 + 4 can enjoy. The whole point of the package is to enable you to improve on your German speaking, reading, and writing.

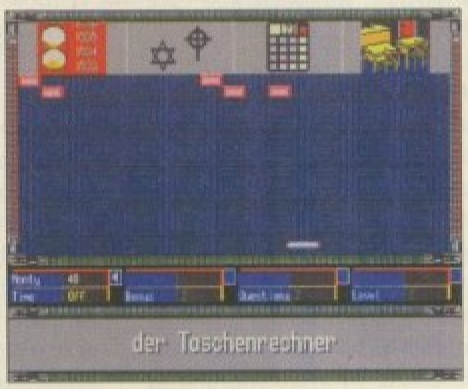
10 out of 10 covers all these features in various forms, although all the information from the National Curriculum is there and can be printed out. For example, you can keep permanent records of your success, achievements and, more unfortunately, what you need to improve on.

With all these excellent ways to display the data in a record-like form, it helps teachers and parents get an idea of how their pupils and children are getting on and where, exactly, they require help.

The games are fairly basic ones – there are six in all. The first is The Cat, which is basically a quick multiple choice game with a novelty addition. The faster you are the more points you get. You can learn quite quickly because you can instantly recognise the correct answer by a simple process of elimination.

Overall, the German package contains some important subjects that are most common for GCSE, School, Family and Sport, as well as all the other sentence and grammatical sides.

The menu system is nice and friendly with a huge big pointer, and this enables very young children to see what they are doing and help their understanding of the package.



The achievement sheet will show all the relevant assessment details from your child's performance

> Overall, the German package contains some important subjects that are most common for GCSE, School, Family and Sport, as well as all the other sentence and grammatical sides

Product: 10 out of 10 Spelling (Structured)
Age range: Under 9s + learning difficulties
Supplier: 10 out of 10
Price: £25.95
Phone: 0113 239 4627
Overall: 8/10

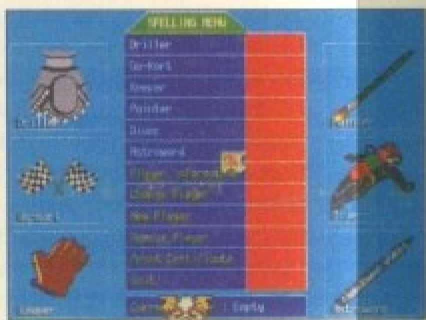
10 out of 10's Spelling tutor differs from most of the other packages because it is aimed at nine-year olds and younger, not to mention catering for children with special needs such as dyslexia.

As with the entire series of 10 out of 10 educational packages, it contains six games which all differ from each other. Most of the games must be completed to a reasonably strict time limit, so not only must you know the ins and outs of the subject you are studying, you must also be quick on the mouse.

What the 10 out of 10 series feature so consistently are the bright, colourful, chunky graphics which really makes it appealing to the child. It's mouse driven, making it the easiest way for children to get to grips with the games. If the child cannot use the mouse properly, it may be an idea to practice occasionally until they are fully confident and comfortable.

The package covers phonetics, rhymes, word matching and syllables, not to mention all the basic grammatical rules.

Not only is the package specially developed for the under nines, it also caters for children who have learning difficulties. Not many packages can boast all these features as well as serving the underdeveloped. If your child does have difficulty with spelling, this is the simplest and most effective package available.



For some unknown reason, a clown will pop up now and again at the foot of the screen. Look, there he is...



Here you are supposed to guide the go-kart over a series of letters to spell out words

Product: Micro English
Age range: Ages 8 and upwards
GCSE Key stages 2 and upwards. Attainment targets 3-6
Supplier: LCL
Price: £24.99
Phone: 01491 579345
Overall: 8/10

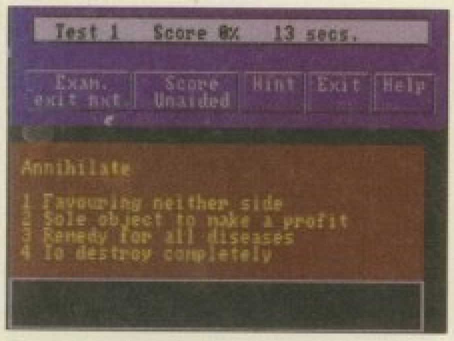
The Micro English package from LCL has to be the most simplistic and effective available, mainly because of the extensive features the Micro package contains.

When you purchase Micro English, not only do you get the two disks containing programs that will undoubtedly improve your grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary, you will also receive a book, entitled 'Countdown to GCSE English.' This happens to be one of the most informative books around. It'll give you tips on managing time, how to answer the questions, sample exams and the oral exam. It truly is the most useful book you could read in preparation for your exams.

The disks contain many programs to help you revise all the topics concerned in the National Curriculum – English grammar, figures of speech, words commonly confused, punctuation, irregular plurals, and if none if these turn up in the GCSE exam I will be extremely surprised.

What makes Micro English enjoyable and easy to use is the fact that the computer actually speaks. A series of speech samples are included on the disk and they regularly appear. Basically, the idea is to improve your spelling, with the computer mentioning the word and you spelling it. Obviously, this could possibly ignite some major flaws, the quality of the speech being an example. With so many samples you can't really expect them to cram in as many high frequency ones on disk as possible, so although the pronunciation is a little muffled they are still understandable.

Overall, LCL's Micro English is fairly reasonable. It may not have the graphics and presentation other packages have but it is still, none-the-less, good value for money.



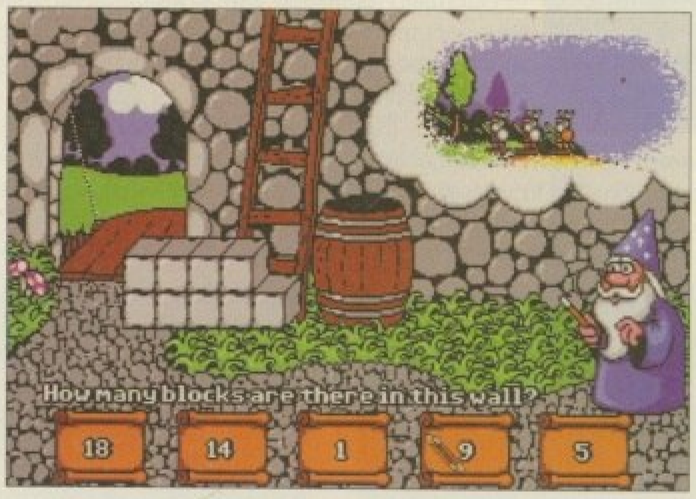
The vocab test is almost certainly the best way of learning words. Don't be put off by the word 'test' either

Comes up trumps

These days, all the educational packages for the Amiga are sold in shops all over the country – all of them boasting good value for money. After noticing how technology has advanced educationally, you can't go far wrong by introducing fun games for children to play while they unexpectedly learn far more than they realise.

The Amiga is one of the most user-friendly, easiest, cheapest and effective computers to date, and very young children can only learn faster and far more efficiently, whereas Microsoft's Windows 95 poses many problems for adults, not to mention young infants.

What makes the Amiga educational market far superior than many other formats is the wide range of topics and age groups covered and it only remains to be seen whether schools will now introduce Amigas into part of their learning process.



Here's a relatively simple number problem. It just involves counting the blocks and stating the answer

Product: Fun School Maths
Age range: 7-11
Supplier: Special Reserve
Price: £25.99
Phone: 01279 600204
Overall: 9/10

In my mind, the Fun School educational series have always been graphically superior over all other packages. They are chunky, colourful, well animated and most of all, fun to watch.

The Fun School series is almost always related to a character or a theme of some description, with the maths based around a character called

The provider's view

What kind of effect does electronic teaching have on parents, teachers and more importantly the children? For instance, how could you stir children away from playing the latest games to using education packages for extra-curricular learning.

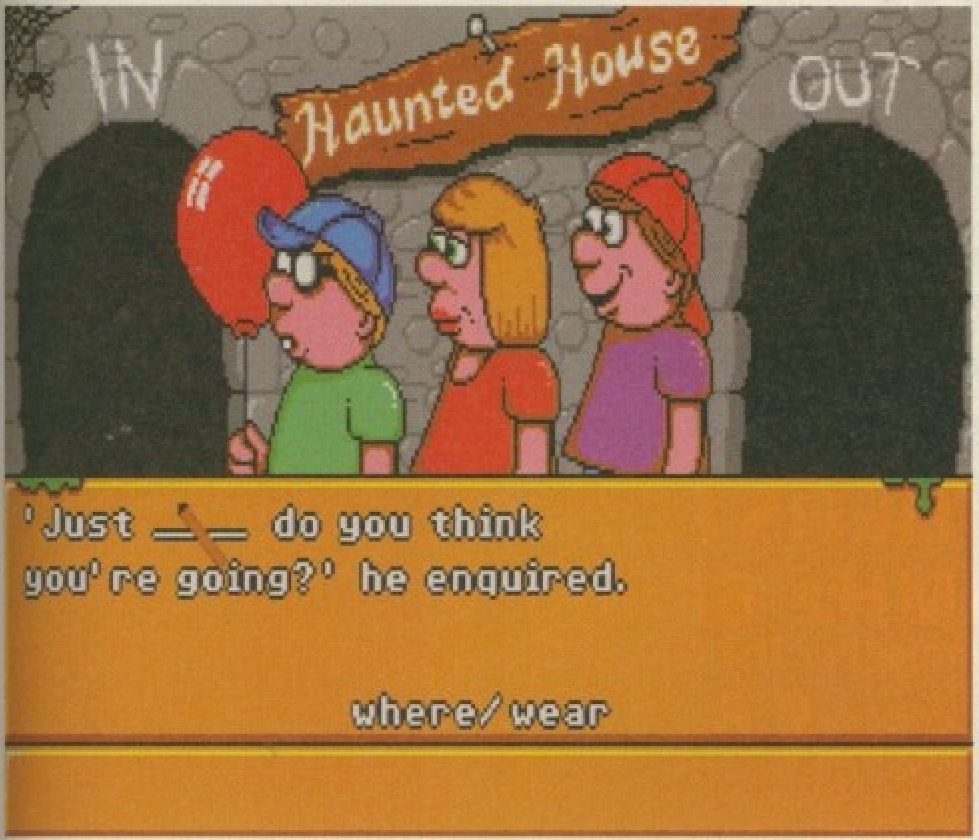
I spoke to David Hirst, the Commercial Director from Europress Software, the company responsible for the excellent Fun School packages. I wanted to find out more about their products and how and why they are used to improve children's learning capabilities. I began by interrogating him about the software.

Firstly, when children are studying the National Curriculum up to eight hours a day at school, how can companies such as Europress Software make their packages appealing enough for the children to come home and pursue the subjects electronically? Hirst believes it's all about talking to the right people: "... it's just getting to grips with what the NC actually wants, by discussion with those professionals who are doing it every day and then by taking traditional game techniques and putting the two together."

> "it is important to pitch the level of difficulty correctly and to bring in, additionally, such appropriate challenges that befits the age group"

There are many different arguments as to how children concentrate and achieve more. Being left to work out the games for themselves and learning from self-tuition and experimentation could be the most effective. Hirst outlines the computers benefits: "... the most important thing is to mix teaching, experimentation, and reinforcement. Computers are better at the last two."

With this in mind, I asked David what he thought the easiest ways of teaching children were, and the best ways of maintaining their concentration and interest, especially with the different age groups to cater for. "... it is important to pitch the level of difficulty correctly and to bring in, additionally, such appropriate challenges that befits the age group. A child of 4-7 will require large and colourful graphics, presenting simple and repetitive problems to solve, whereas at 8-11 some fast action, dexterity, and logic are required, plus the introduction of traditional gaming techniques. At 15-16-years, the emphasis must be on results, so the gameplay is toned down and clever teaching methods are employed." If a child was left alone with the game



Here comes a slightly harder number puzzle – working out outputs always used to pose a problem for me

Merlin. Merlin will lead you through all the features of the package, so he will always be there when you are stuck or need some more information. King Arthur also makes an appearance because of the medieval setting that the maths application is set in. Not only do you get to improve on your arithmetic, you also get to travel around Merlin's castle, Camelot, exploring all different details and rooms.

Inside the locations you'll find different puzzles and secret rooms. There are six games in total to play – The Crystal Conference, Decisive Data, Perfect Potions, Broken Battlements, Magic Machine and Weighty Weapons. All these imaginatively named puzzles are basically jazzed up versions of old mathematical exercises such as outputs, number recognition and simple adding, subtracting, multiplying and division games.

The Fun School series has achieved the status as the UK's top-selling range of educational software and it's quite easy to see why. The graphics are excellent and imaginative along with polished presentation and a superb range of sound effects. If your child is struggling with maths, then the Fun School package should be top of your list.

and happened to be troubled without parental supervision, don't you think the child may get flustered or even bored. Hirst refers to the main aims of the package: "... if this is the case, the software has failed. It should be intuitive."

One of the problems that may occur if students go home every night and learn an extra section of a subject using the computer is that they would lose the benefit of teaching because they would quite clearly not be a case that requires help. The pupil would also gain advantages over other students.

> ... it is a well-known fact that one of the prime reasons why computers enter the home is in the belief that their presence will benefit the children

"That's life" he said. "This is not a communist society. Thankfully, we don't work to the lowest common denominator. The kids with the benefit of interested parents will bring on those without, so everyone gains."

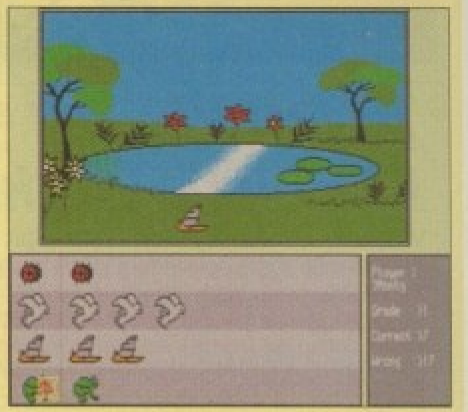
A problem that can also arrive from these consequences is that when the child advances in a particular topic, they will return to school and learn exactly the same things. That surely would become repetitive for the child – losing the benefit of education itself. Hirst believes it could be a problem: "... it could be, but we maintain that teachers teach, computers reinforce, so teachers can teach the next level with a better foundation on knowledge in the children."

If parents should happen to buy themselves a computer for business work or personal use, the majority of children would obviously see it as a games machine rather than a working computer. Hirst disagrees with the fact that the computer is looked upon as a form of entertainment: "... it is a well-known fact that one of the prime reasons why computers enter the home is in the belief that their presence will benefit the children."

With the Amiga being relatively cheap, compared to anything like PCs and Apple Macintoshes, would it be the perfect computer for children to learn with at school, especially with its ease of use. Hirst disagrees: "although the Amiga scores for its graphics, particularly when price is taken into account, in my opinion the new Windows 95 interface is much better and the Apple Mac has been better for a nearly a decade."

Product: 10 out of 10 Maths (Statistics)
Age range: 6 to 16

Supplier: 10 out of 10
Price: £25.95
Phone: 0113 239 4627
Overall: 7/10



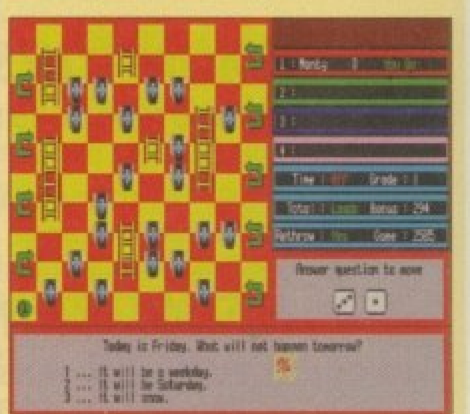
The game here is called 'Survey' and the idea is to survey everything that comes on the screen

10 out of 10 maths follows exactly the same principles of all the other packages, the only difference being the content. Although consistency is one of their strong points, their presentation and user-friendliness are even stronger.

Once again, the series contains huge colourful graphics and a nice big menu screen which makes the information stand out by far. The package contains all the topics covered in the latest National Curriculum syllabus like probability, graphs, observations, interpretation, average and all basic statistics.

There are three sets of age correlated graphics you can alter, so the package will appeal to a six-year old as well as a 16-year old. The latter will want more emphasis on information and assessment details rather than fun graphics to keep them amused.

Overall, the package contains all the information you need, along with nice colourful graphics – and it is very simple to use. Although statistics is one of the easier topics, many people will still need pointers on how to display their courseware and use correct values and so on. If your child is studying maths, this may not be an essential purchase but it'll certainly come in handy for revision.



Hang on. It may be Saturday, and it may snow! Oh, I don't know, I'll go for the other one

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SOS Amiga?

£50 prize letter

I have read many letters concerning the future of the Amiga and comparisons between the different computer platforms. It is true that now the price of a standard Amiga, when fully-equipped, will buy a far superior PC system, but there are other things to consider. The PC is an ongoing concern, that is, the user has to continually invest money to get the best out of the machine and its software. Then there is the initial investment and the cost of the software; you can buy a basic Amiga and add to it over the years, similarly you can buy a basic PC (a 386 with 4Mb RAM) and discover that nothing will work on it.

The Amiga is also unique in its software pricing; the closest competitor to Organiser, for example, is In Control on the Macintosh which costs double the price of Organiser. You can buy a new Amiga with Photogenics for the retail price of Photoshop. Word for Windows, as another example, still costs more than a second-hand A1200 with a copy of Wordworth 2. Wordworth and Final Writer may presently lack the advanced features of Word and WordPerfect, but how many people actually push these Amiga packages to their limits – I know I do, but I am doing a degree in graphic arts management. This leads onto another area of discussion. Many Amiga users have complained that they want Word for Workbench, but how many people would actually buy it? The requirements that this package would place on the hardware coupled with the price would limit its appeal dramatically.

Amiga users tend to complain if they have to invest in their machine – Sim City 2000, TFX and PageStream 3 are just three examples. Because of these factors, companies such as Microsoft would never be able to compete effectively in the Amiga market. The Amiga can be a highly cost-effective and productive system for small businesses, home users and graphic applications if it receives the correct channels of distribution and marketing. At the moment, Escom seem to have bought Commodore's marketing policy along with their technology.

One last point I would like to raise is the future of Amiga technology. I have read that the next generation of Amigas will have a RISC processor, retargetable graphics and no custom chip set. Does this mean that the Amiga will lose its hidden power and individuality? Will it also mean that the Amiga will have the power to display 24-bit graphics without the dreaded ham fringing?

What about software? News on this front has been non-existent. The nulti-threaded nature of Opus 5 puts Workbench to shame and only serves to display its weaknesses. 24-bit datatype support, on the other hand, would give Amiga applications professional results and the ability to support every conceivable file format. Ami File Safe boasts idiot-proof hard drive security – will this become the standard? What about CrossDos and CrossMac?

The news of the next generation Workbench has been virtually non-existent and this is one area that will greatly appeal to the industry and current Amiga users. I hope that future revisions of Workbench are not going to become few and far between, with a high cost.

Ryan Morse, Milton Keynes

Let's get this straight. It doesn't matter what machine you buy, whether it be a PC, PowerMac or even an Amiga, you will still need to spend money on it. Whether you spend that money when you first buy the

Due to the lack of positive information coming from Amiga Technologies, we have had an awful lot of letters about the future of the Amiga. Rather than print them all, I'll just say thanks for all your suggestions (perhaps we'll be able to run a 'Future Workbench' feature) and here's a sample:



Plain English campaign

This letter is a plea to the people who make the utilities for your CoverDisks and would also apply to everyone who makes any kind of software that does not incorporate a good manual. I don't expect you or a PD operator to supply manuals to all and sundry, but why do they make their instructions so damn hard to understand. Nine times out of ten I have to print these documents out, but even then, sitting down with a drink, I still cannot comprehend them.

I am not alone in this because I have friends who think the same, and I am sure there must be hundreds if not thousands of your readers who think likewise. In the end I get so fed up with loading and unloading the software, trying to do this and that with it, that I must have dozens of CoverDisks that never get used. If something has to go in the C: drawer or if I have to amend my user-startup, why not just say so? Why write lines and lines of useless text I have to fight through to get to the information I need. All I want to know is how to get the thing to work, not how the structure of the software is put together (who the hell gives a damn?).

If people complain because no-one is sending them their shareware fees, it's because most people have become fed up trying to understand how to get the thing on their hard drive or floppy and have thrown the disk back into the shoe box in contempt.

Ken Walsh, London

I understand your frustration. However, there are some things you can do about the problem. The first is to be aware that most good PD and shareware is written in Europe these days. This will mean that English is not the author's first language. Secondly, because there are no statutes for shareware and most shareware authors work on their own, they write documentation to suit themselves. This is quite often, as you say, not good enough for a wider audience. Thirdly, most shareware authors are only too pleased to be contacted by a user of their application and you can confront them with your problem that way. E-mail is usually the quickest way, but most authors also include a phone number and address.

Staccato snag

This letter is reprinted as sent to us...

I just thought I would drop you a line, or two, and compensate for the hour or two wasted installing, reinstalling, your CoverDisk freebies.

I have noticed that quality programmes, Wordworth, Brilliance, Etc. Can be installed. Deleted. Reinstalled. All

machine or do it over a period of years, you will still end up spending a fortune on your machine if you are at all serious.

What you said about Amiga users complaining if they have to upgrade their machine is perfectly correct, and I think it is really sad to hear people asking if they can run LightWave on their A600, or whether their base A1200 is powerful enough to run Doom under PCTask. We have to face facts. Unless you are willing to spend a wad of cash on your Amiga, you won't get anywhere near the performance you can get from a £1000 PC.

There is no easy way out. Escom themselves are in no easy position. Where do they position the machine they have bought? Is it a games machine. No, if all you want to do is play games, then a PlayStation can do things that the Amiga will in all likelihood never be able to do. Is it a productivity machine? Not unless your users are willing to get a hard drive, monitor, extra memory and preferably an accelerator (bang! there goes your grand).

The solution lies in a new, slightly more expensive, hard drive-only machine. If the A1200 had only ever been available as a hard drive-based machine, a lot of the problems facing serious and games publishers would be eased. There would be no question of having to trim down the software to make it fit on disks, and users would be much happier running from a hard drive. The next step would be to ensure that every Amiga came equipped with a CPU that had an MMU. This would open the way for a system for virtual memory and all that that would entail. With only a few minor changes the Amiga could be a powerful machine.

With reference to your last point about a new generation of Amigas, you ask whether the Amiga will lose all its advantages. To be frank, what once was revolutionary is behind the times now thanks mainly to the lack of R&D carried out by Commodore because they were happy to sell A500s. Other things are happening in the larger world of computing that Escom are almost certainly taking notice of. One such is CHRP (Common Hardware Reference Platform), a cooperative effort to create one single platform conceived by Apple and IBM. Perhaps Escom should take the Amiga in this direction by porting AmigaDOS to the PowerPC processor. After all, it will probably be the only RISC chip of any power that is made in sufficient numbers to become a commodity item. Amiga Technologies would then also have some of the weight taken off their shoulders in terms of having to design all the hardware that goes into an Amiga – third-party peripherals would take care of that.

Almost everybody in the know agrees that Workbench is one of the most fluid operating systems on any platform, but it is woefully specified when compared with the Macintosh or Windows offerings. No support for networking, security, memory protection, virtual memory, no multimedia support (and no, I don't just mean being able to play animations). And software publishers aren't consistent or open-minded enough either – programs that don't offer screen mode selection are particularly old-fashioned – as on-line help, localisation and optimisation for particular processor types (where necessary) are all bugbears.

As it stands, the future is only average for the Amiga. What we need are concrete facts from Amiga Technologies before any hopes or fears can be confirmed. But Amiga Technologies is a small company that has only just started up and in my opinion we won't hear anything until Easter '96 at the earliest.

without problem. But, when I come to much of the Material you give out on your CoverDisks.
There are problems.

If the programme is Deleted, and Reinstalled, then it seems that not all of the libraries are overwritten, or deleted, leading to a consequent failure to Reinstall, or more commonly, a failure to load, once installed.
I do not know enough about the writing of programmes, but obviously, when I select a programme icon, and select Delete. Not all of the programme is then actually deleted. Some parts remain, and problems occur.

I have just spent two hours attempting to trace all of the files to Virus Checker VC.34. Deleting them, one by one. So that I can then Install the latest version. October 1995.
In the end I gave up, and will some day try to Reinstall the old version!

Not a good way to proceed. Badly written programmes like this have caused me more computer headaches than anything else. And it is not good enough.
It is a major problem which in the year I have been buying your excellent Magazine, has not been addressed once!
I sometimes wonder if you actually load, delete, reload. the programmes you give. Testing. And I wonder what Crap you are left with on your HD. Afterwards.

One final question which I am sure many readers would like the answer to:
When I run any Interlaced screen on my Commodore MultiSync 1950b all I get is severe flicker. Split Screens.
Yet when I run the programme Fractal Worlds. AC. Freebie.
I can choose and run successfully any of the screen modes. SuperHighRes. Interlaced. Etc.
All suggesting that this failure to run similarly in Wordworth. Brilliance. Workbench.
Is a WB Software failure. Is this so
What do you think.

Andrew Brown

I think this letter is best read aloud in a declamatory tone of voice, so that it sounds like the poem it is. As for your problems Mr Brown, I can assure you that we do indeed check out every piece of software to see a) whether we like it or not and b) to check that it does work properly. Some of the software we put on the CoverDisk might be a little buggy, after all most of it is shareware written not by a large software company, but probably some guy in his bedroom, but all of it works to a satisfactory extent. We have also found that, most of the time, there is no need to remove old versions before installing a newer one as a sensible installer script will take care of that for you.

Yours is the first letter we have received about Virus Checker, so obviously there haven't been too many problems with it. The problems you are having with your monitor definitely sound odd, but we really need more details to be able to firm up a response (exactly what screenmodes you are using, what other software you have running and so on).

letters please

Keep those letters coming! If you can't be bothered to find a bit of paper and a stamp, why not e-mail us? Simply point your mailer to: ESP@acomp.demon.co.uk There's a £50 pound prize for the best letter printed as an incentive

Experience at what cost?

Having just purchased a second-hand Amiga 1200 for the kids to learn on, one of the first things I did was to purchase a copy of September's *Amiga Computing* for the tools disks.

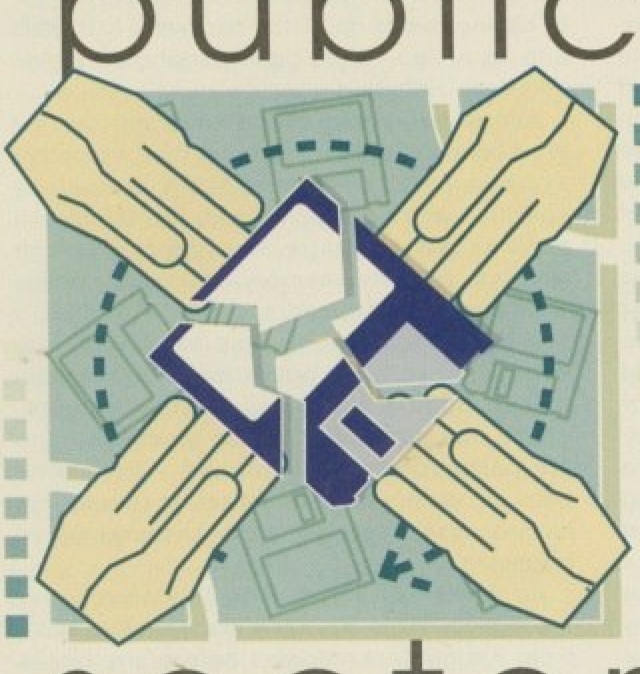
I put in the disks, did as I was told, but still no joy. The disks aren't faulty, it's my fault for being dense when it comes to computers. So I carried on reading the magazine and came across the 'Newbie Nightmare' letter in ESP. Ah, I thought, good letter. I read it, then read the reply. Agh! Utter amazement and disgust in what was written. Your reply about wasting space on beginners must be in very bad taste. If you think about it, not only have you got to hold onto your more experienced and no doubt die hard Amiga users, but the beginners who will be buying second-hand Amigas. If you're mag can't help newcomers, then God help the kids and me.

Hope that hurt,

M Sheldon, Leek

Ouch! OK, I know there are new Amiga owners out there every day, but even so, we certainly wouldn't want to turn the whole magazine into a tutorial and lose our more experienced readers. Owing to the finalisation of the new Amiga pack, yes, we will be having a beginners section back in *Amiga Computing*, starting next month. In the meantime, keep persevering with your CoverDisks and I'm sure you'll see the light...

public sector



Dave Cusick once more sifts eagerly through the PD and shareware mailbag

Shareware authors have, over the last few years, filled in many gaps in the software world. In recent times we've seen stunning paint packages, image processors, games and utilities costing only a few pounds, while programs have been released with far more specialised uses than commercial producers would consider addressing.

Continuing that trend, this month Public Sector looks at ADmail, a top quality e-mail package costing just a tenner. Given that the joys (and delays) of the Internet are a relatively recent discovery for many Amiga users, myself included, I wonder whether in the months to come we might see the ultimate shareware Web browser? As things stand currently, I know of Amiga owners who run Mac emulators when surfing because Mac Internet software is so much superior to Amiga Web software. AMosaic is alright, but it's certainly not the fastest or most stable of programs, is it?

In a future issue I'll be taking a look at some of the better Amiga Internet software. For now, however, feast your eyes on these affordable delights...

Diary 2000

Produced by: Dave Freeman
Available from: Centurion PD

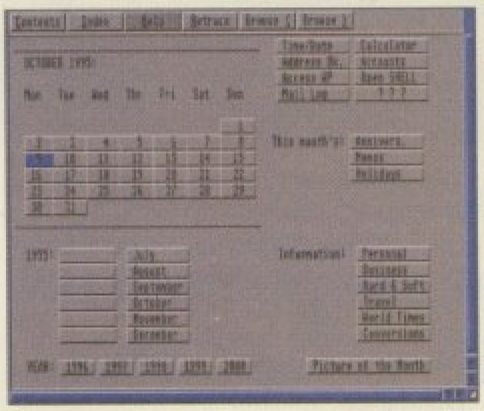
Diary 2000 is an example of an imaginative approach to the challenge of creating a fully functional desktop diary. It's not a program as such, being instead a highly configurable modular system of AmigaGuide files.

In use, Diary 2000 is beautifully simple. For instance, it's possible to select any day before the end of the year 2000, whereupon a text editor will be launched allowing you to edit details for that day. You can also launch your favourite word processor, accounts program and address book from Diary 2000, which coordinates the proceedings and ties everything together quite nicely.

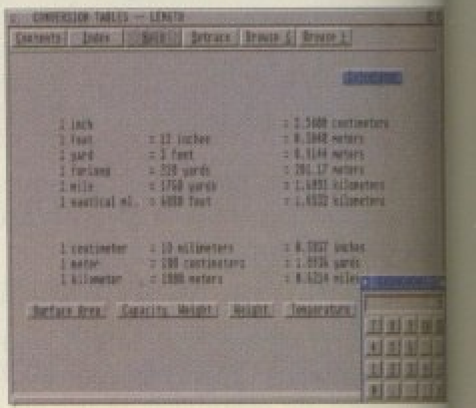
Amongst the more interesting inclusions is the Mail Log, which simultaneously opens windows in which details of letters sent and received can be recorded; ideal if your memory is as bad as mine.

Whilst this may appear rather simplistic and pointless on paper, in action the system is swift and effective, and the degree of customisation possible makes Diary 2000 just as versatile as a Filofax or similar personal organiser. Of course, there isn't the same portability here, but the whole system is much easier to keep updated and tidy.

Usage and customisation is explained thoroughly and clearly in the accompanying text files, and all in all I must confess to being pretty impressed by this little offering. It's shareware, so if you make regular use of it you really ought to send the author a tenner.



Organise your life with Diary 2000



Diary 2000 launches the WB calculator program for measurement conversion

20 Little Green Men

Produced by: Various
Available from: SAdENESS PD

This intriguing 20-disk package covers a broad range of subjects including alleged abductions by aliens, crop circles, and mind control to name but a few.

The first three disks contain bulletins from a group called the Bay Area Sceptics, dating back to June 1982, and a newsletter called Echoes Of Conspiracy from the mid eighties. There are also issues of Inside UFOlogy and Saucer Smear, which contain material of interest to those who believe the Earth has for a long time been the destination of all manner of alien explorers.

The next nine disks contain the fascinating Aliens Confidential Multimedia. This is essentially a multi-disk Amigaguide extravanza of text documents, with the occasional image thrown in to enliven the proceedings slightly. Cattle mutilations, an alleged encounter Apollo 11 astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin had with alien spacecraft whilst walking on the moon, and all sorts of other mysterious incidents are chronicled here. There are also plenty of accusations of a conspiracy by the US government to keep secret hundreds of papers and photographs, which it is claimed would prove that UFOs have been visiting our planet regularly for decades.

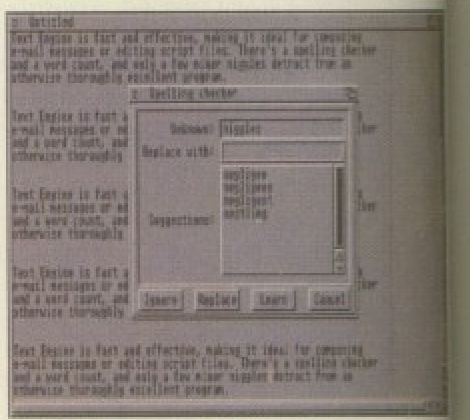
Also included is issue two of Aliens Confidential, a disk magazine featuring more of the same. Then there's the X-Files Guide, an informative collection of text documents

Text Engine 5.0

Programmed by: Nicholas Harvey
Available from: Seasoft

Whilst all-singing, all-dancing WYSIWYG word and document processors are undoubtedly very useful, there are times when a fast and basic text editor is infinitely more appropriate. There's no point fiddling around with the Startup Sequence in Wordworth, or composing your e-mail in Final Writer, when something like MEmacs would suffice. However MEmacs is scarcely perfect, and the lack of some near-essential features like word wrap makes it slightly unfriendly and irritating at times.

Text Engine, on the other hand, offers a great deal more. In addition to word wrap there is a 36,000 word spelling checker, an instantaneous word count, and basic text

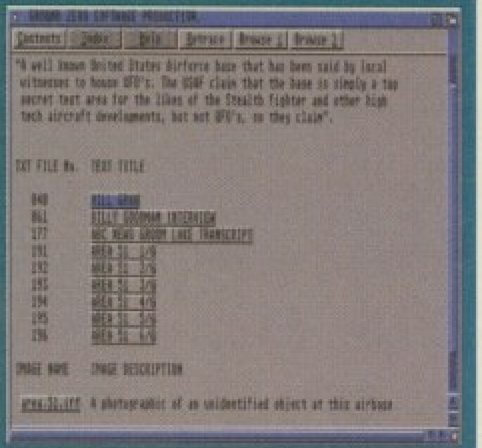


Fast and effective word cruncher Text Engine in action

related to the cult sci-fi series, which was originally reviewed in issue 86.

There are also three issues of Out Of Space, an inexplicably AGA-only disk magazine from NFA, which offer still more evidence to support UFO theories from behind an attractive and highly configurable interface. Finally, there's the three-disk UFO: Finding The Truth, which consists of yet more text documents written by people who claim to have conclusive proof of the existence of alien species beyond our comprehension.

There is a degree of overlapping in terms of subject matter covered, and some more imaginative presentation and greater use of pictures might have been a good idea in some cases. However, considering this twenty disk package costs a pretty reasonable twelve quid, I'd have to recommend it to anybody who's open-minded about the possibility that humankind is not alone in the universe.

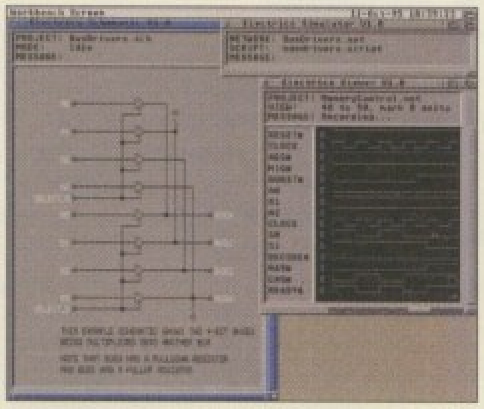


Fascinating and sometimes worrying testimonies from individuals who claim to have seen UFOs

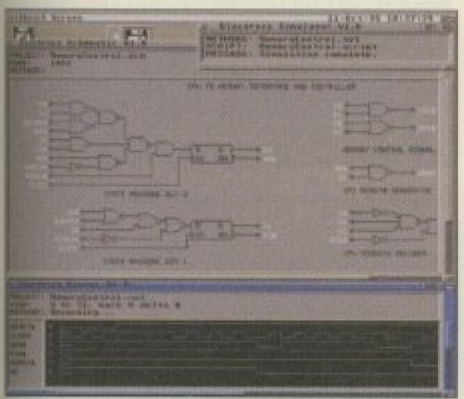
Electrics Digital Designer

Programmed by: Chris Sterne
Available from: Chris Sterne

Written to allow the design and testing of digital circuits, Electrics is a suite of three connected programs. The first is for actually designing the circuit, the second for testing it and the third for reviewing the test results. The three can be run simultaneously on the Workbench screen.



Speed up the entire circuit design process with Electrics



Electrics Digital Designer in all its multi-windowed glory

Whilst I don't really know enough about the subject matter to be a good judge of the program's power, it certainly appears to boast a wide range of features. The example files included suggest that some complex designs can be created using this software.

The attractive WB2 interface makes program operation pleasant, and the inclusion of keyboard shortcuts is very welcome. The whole package looks to have had a great deal of time and effort lavished upon it, and whilst it might have only limited appeal because of its specialised function, for those in search of such a program the (Canadian) $12 shareware fee seems quite reasonable.

formatting. Since the printouts use your printers standard in-built fonts, these formatting commands simply consist of bold, italic, underline, sub- and superscripts, and so on. However, since producing lengthy, flashy documents is not Text Engine's primary function, the commands on offer are perfectly adequate.

Actually producing a document using Text Engine is a breeze thanks to the high speed of operation and the general user-friendliness of the design. It's ideal for editing ASCII files of one sort or another and seems quite stable, unsurprising given its lengthy history as a popular shareware text editor.

This latest version of the program includes a fully font-sensitive GadTools GUI, and the Workbench AppWindow facility is supported allowing files to be dropped onto the program window to load them up.

If there is one criticism I would make, it is that whilst cursor movement can be achieved using the mouse, pressing shift and an arrow key does not move the cursor to the end of the current word or line - it merely inserts some bizarre character. This can be a little frustrating when you're used to other word processors, but it's forgivable in the light of Text Engine's many redeeming features.

If you make regular use of the program, you ought to show your appreciation by sending Mr Harvey the £5 shareware fee. That's a small price to pay for such an excellent product.

Glory box

I want to hear from you if you have any program, whatever its purpose, which you consider worthy of review. Whether it will be freely distributable public domain, shareware or licenceware, if you feel it's of sufficient quality to merit coverage then stick it in a jiffy bag or padded envelope and send it in with all haste. I promise I'll at least look at your work – even if it's yet another Lottery program or Klondike cardset. It does make my job a lot easier though if disks are clearly labelled. Please also include a cover letter detailing the disk contents and price and giving some basic instructions. The magic address is:

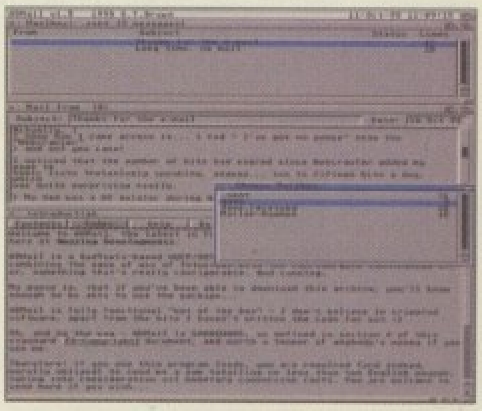
Dave Cusick
PD submissions
Amiga Computing
Media House
Adlington Park
Macclesfield SK10 4NP

ADmail 1.5

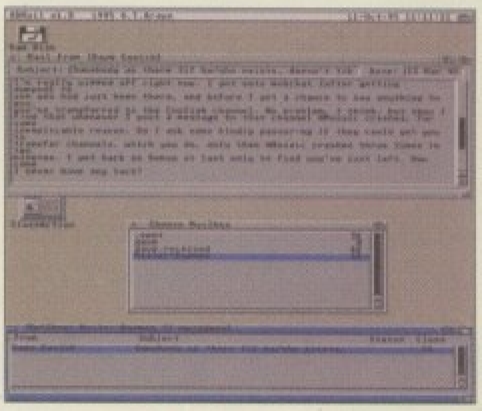
Programmed by: Simon Brown
Available from: Aminet

There really don't seem to be many top-quality e-mailing programs knocking around on the Amiga; most are let down by bugs and generally poor design. Fortunately ADmail does not seem to have fallen into this trap.

Installation is relatively straightforward ➤



Friendly and reliable, ADmail 1.5 is a top quality product



Get in on the action and start e-mailing right away with an Internet connection and ADmail

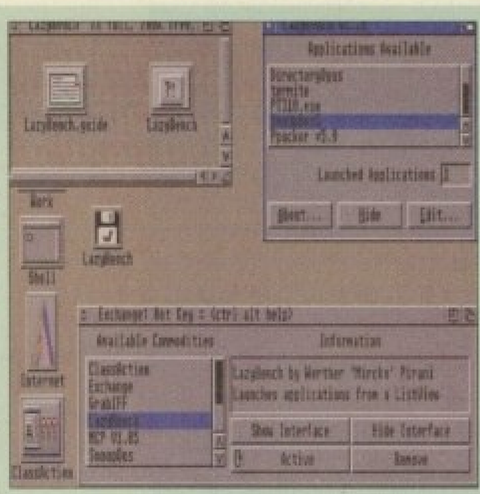
Lazybench

Programmed by: Werther Pirani
Available from: Aminet

In the mould of Toolmanager and Toolsdaemon, this is one of those programs that could revolutionise the way in which hard drive owners use the Workbench. It creates a scrolling list of programs on the Workbench screen which can be clicked on to load them instantly, without having to wade through endless drawers.

It runs as a commodity, meaning that it is accessible at any time from Exchange or using its own hotkey combination. Once you've selected a program from the list, Lazybench vanishes until the next time you call upon its services, leaving the Workbench screen uncluttered in case the program you have launched requires the screen space.

Configuration is achieved by simply creating a text file containing the path names of the programs you'd like to appear in the listview, with Lazybench then displaying just the name of the program file itself.



Lazybench, the ideal solution for those nested-folder blues

Lazybench features a nice font-adaptive GUI, and supports virtual and public screens meaning that you can have it pop up practically anywhere you desire. It's only 16472 bytes in size as well, making it a great deal more friendly to low-memory users than some applications of this kind. If you don't have Aminet access, by the way, don't worry; it won't take PD libraries long to appreciate the potential of Lazybench. Highly recommended.

Find the answer within

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Bradford
West Yorkshire BD6 2TN
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OnLine PD
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Tel: 01704 834335

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Courtwick Lane
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West Sussex BN17 7PA
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Chris Sterne
1111 West 7th Avenue
Vancouver
British Columbia
Canada V6H 1B5

Philip C Swales
28 Campbell Road
Hartlepool
Cleveland
TS25 3BB

➤

if you have any experience of mailing packages, although an installation script might have been helpful for newcomers. However, the accompanying Amigaguide document does explain the installation process quite well and with patience Net newbies should be able to get things up and running relatively smoothly.

ADmail does not include its own text editor, relying instead on programs like MEmacs (or even Text Engine, reviewed in these very pages). Selecting "Send New Mail" or "Reply" within ADmail launches the editor, and then once you've finished composing a message selecting "Save and Exit" from the MEmacs file menu will return you to ADmail flawlessly.

ADmail's more impressive features include the option to create a list of aliases, so, for instance, instead of seeing simes@amdev.demon.co.uk as the sender of a message you would see Simon Brown. The list of aliases pops up whenever you want to send or forward mail, although of course you could always select "Someone else" if you don't want to communicate with any of these people.

In summary this is something of an internet essential, and whilst there are no features disabled in this version, the ten pounds the author is requesting as a registration fee is definitely worthwhile. AC

Haunted By You

After a decent enough debut issue (reviewed in AC86), disk magazine MovieZone is back with basically more of the same. The numerous short and snappy articles include reviews of recent and classic films, features, and general rants about things which the authors feel strongly about. There are also now plenty of digitised pictures from some of the films covered, most being of a reasonable quality. I'll forgive the fact that the writers couldn't remember my name when discussing the writeups the first issue received, and again recommend MovieZone to cinema buffs everywhere. It's available from Philip C Swales and costs £2.20.



A clip from Jurassic Park, one of many black and white images included in MovieZone issue 2

Emotional conflict

Programmed by: Asa Margetts
Available from: OnLine PD

A mouse-driven adventure game, Emotional Conflict boasts some attractive graphics with a cartoony flavour, and some interesting puzzles to solve, not all of them immediately obvious.

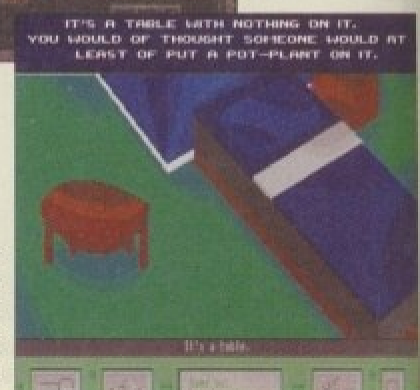
The scene is set with some atmospheric music, and the fairly wacky story so far is explained in text and pictures at the start of the game. Then it's straight into pointy-clicky mode for what turns out to be a fairly enjoyable little offering.

There do appear to be plenty of limitations imposed on your actions - for example, conversation with your mother is limited to a sort of "Who are you?", "I'm your mother", "Oh" affair, and you can't leave your house until you've found a map. However, this approach does ensure that you've always got a definite target and you won't be wandering around wondering what on earth is going on.

Whilst it won't win any awards for design or originality, Emotional Conflict is a competent graphic adventure all the more impressive considering it was written in that most maligned of programming languages, AMOS Basic. A couple of spelling and grammar mistakes aside, the presentation is excellent and there's plenty of depth to keep you engaged during those long winter evenings.



Asa Margett's latest AMOS offering, Emotional Conflict



Decent graphics and some tough puzzles are on offer in this competent graphic adventure

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COLOUR MONITOR UPGRADE
SEE PAGE 2

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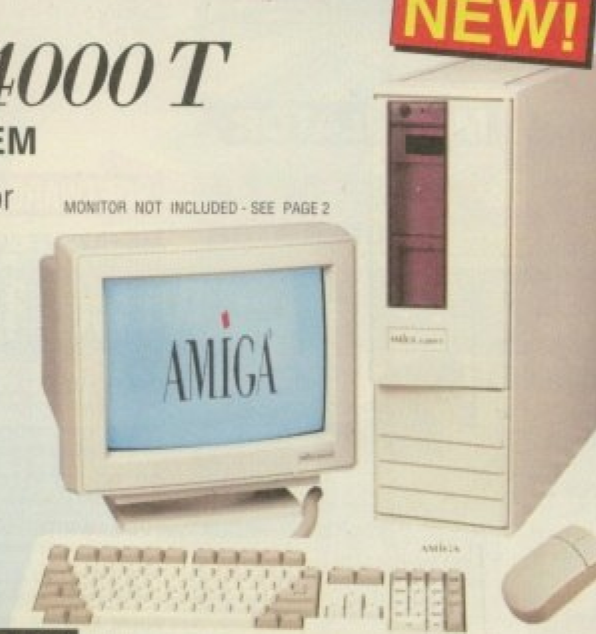
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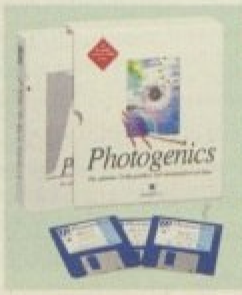


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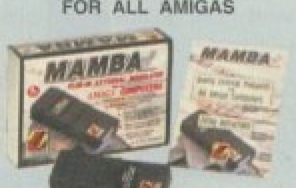
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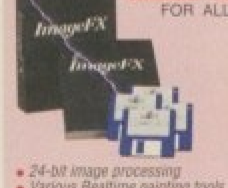


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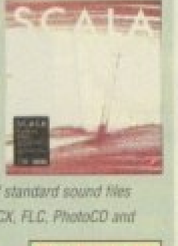


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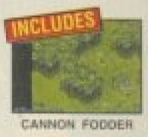
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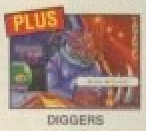
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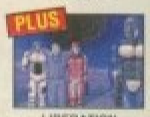
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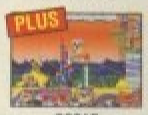
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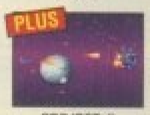
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Screwed screens

Please help. I have an A1200 with a Commodore 1925 MultiScan monitor. The problem is that when I use any of the Hi-res no-flicker modes, i.e. MultiScan Productivity, with the Workbench screen and Final Writer, the visible screen is offset from the left by 1 to 2 half inches, depending on the setting of the width and horizontal controls.

Having this wasted space all the time is really bugging me. I have tried to follow the instructions in the Workbench and AGA user guides, but to no avail. I have no problems with the modes I do not want to use, so where am I going wrong?

B Edge, Sheffield

Monitor settings vary slightly from monitor to monitor, and as the monitor drivers supplied by Commodore are set on a different monitor from yours, you are going to get variance on both the screen's position and size.

The only proper and safe way of adjusting the screen's visible size and position is to use the overscan preference program. Unfortunately, it is only until Workbench 3.1 that you can actually adjust the global screen position. The 3.1 overscan preference lets you move the screen around using the cursor keys.

Now, it's not too cost effective running out and buying OS 3.1 just so you can change the screen's positioning. This leaves two options open for you. Firstly, there have been a number of extra monitor drivers released by people into the public domain that are set-up for specific monitors. Unfortunately, these are normally just for the 1942 monitor, so probably would not help.

The only other option is to get hold of a program called MonEd. This allows you to adjust various aspects of the monitor driver while the screen is being displayed – one of the options is the screen's horizontal and vertical positioning. You do, however, have to be careful when using this program, because if you adjust some of the values wildly you could damage your monitor. So only do small value changes if you do use MonEd.

Quality printouts

I am trying to find out if there is a company that would print some pictures from a disk. I am looking for top quality reproductions and have been told by others that they have seen an advert in an Amiga magazine that does this kind of work, but I do not seem to be able to find one. I hope you are able to help as a top-end printer is out of my budget. Also, any advice on copyright of computer generated art would be greatly received.

Simon, Bracknell

I do seem to recall seeing an advert for t-shirt and picture printing, but could not find it again. You could try contacting E.M. Computergraphic on 01255 431389, who deal with DTP products and might be able to sort something out for you.

Bizarre borders

Can anyone help me with a printer problem I have been having? I recently purchased an Epson Stylus colour printer for use with my Amiga 3000, and also bought Wolf Faust's Studio Pro II software for the drivers.

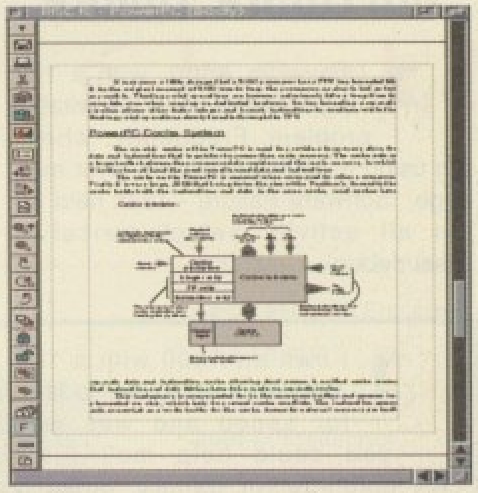
After following the instructions carefully, everything was set up when I noticed that I could not get proper borders for my US letter size paper. When printing a full page graphic file, the Studio software showed about an inch border all round the page, yet the printout chopped about half an inch off the bottom and printed it on a second page.

Also, the pages from Wordworth 3 do not obey the border or ruler settings and shift to about a tenth of an inch left margin and a wide right margin. The same is true of Final Writer. In my Workbench printer prefs I have set the margins to left 5 and right 75, with pica 10 and 66 lines a page. The word processors just seem to ignore this, can you help?

FGSamiga@aol.com

Studio Pro is very good piece of software that greatly improves the printing quality of your Amiga's printer. The problem you have with your printer cutting off the last half inch is an old one. Generally, it is not a problem with the software but with the dip switches on the printer itself. You should check

➤



Final Writer lets you specify exactly where you want the page bounderies and margins.

HD horrors

I have a very annoying problem with my A4000, and this only occurs with people who have two high density drives. I have two genuine Chinon 3.5 HD disk drives in my A4000/040, and the problem is as follows:

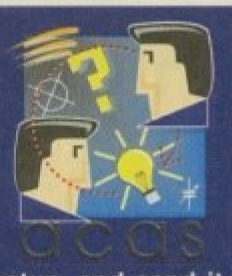
If two HD Amiga disks are inserted at the same time, one in DF0 and the other in DF1, then only one drive will be recognised as a HD disk and the other will then be recognised as a standard 880k disk, making it unreadable.

The only way to cure this is to insert the two disks separately, waiting for one to be recognised before inserting the other. Is this a bug in the OS? It is very frustrating for making back-ups and the like. Has any made a software or hardware patch for this?

Dirk, Belgium

This is something I haven't come across before. One possible solution to your problem is that it is necessary to change a jumper on your A4000 mother board. The one in question is labelled J531, and is located just in front of the parallel port.

If it is left open, with no connection, then the second floppy drive will be set for a high density drive. However, if it is closed then it is configured for a double density drive. Hopefully this will solve your problem.



Do you have a problem? Do you sometimes find yourself poised over your Amiga with axe in hand, spouting profanity at the stubborn refusal of your software or hardware to behave properly?

Well, calm down and swap the axe for pen and paper, jot down your problems, along with a description of your Amiga setup, and send it off to Amiga Computing Advice Service, IDG Media, Media House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield SK10 4NP. Alternatively, e-mail us at ACAS@acomp.demon.co.uk

Any questions?

in your manual that the dip switches are set up properly for the standard US letter size.

The problem with word processors is that they use their own margin settings, and do ignore the Workbench settings – which are only worked out as characters anyway. Final Writer and the like use inches or centimetres to determine the page and paper size.

It is worthwhile taking half an hour out and working precisely what the paper size and page size should be for each program. You should adjust the margin size to your own tastes, the easiest way being to use two large boxes, one outlining the entire page and the other marking where the margins should be. You can then adjust the paper size to take up as much of the paper as possible, and also find out the correct margin positions.

Software failure

I have an A500 with a 1Mb upgrade and have an irritating problem. Frequently, when I am using my Amiga I get an error message, 'Software Failure - Task held finish all activity select cancel to reset/debug'.

This is very annoying since I have to reset my Amiga, thus losing all my work. What does this the message mean and is there a way to prevent it?

O Gosling, Hull

What you are getting is the dreaded Guru Meditation, well, that is what it used to be called – now we just have the much more boring software failure. Normally, this means that some program you have been running has done something naughty and crashed your system.

Depending on how bad the crash was, you will either get the requester on the screen – which means that if the program you are using has not crashed you can normally save off your work – or you have a catastrophic crash which takes your whole system down and you just get the blank screen with a flashing red alert message smirking at you.

The worrying thing is that you say you are continually getting the Guru message. This usually points to a more serious problem than a software error, particularly if you cannot reproduce the same crash situations. By that I mean if software has a bug in it that crashes the system, you should be able to do the same things over and over again that cause the machine to crash. Like choosing a certain menu selection in a certain situation.

If this crashing is occurring at random times, I would suspect you have a more serious problem than just a software bug or incompatibility. It is more likely that something has gone wrong with the hardware in your machine. Normally, the problem is with memory, because even a slight problem with your memory will cause program errors and so crashes.

Having said that, the Amiga is fairly complex on the old chip front, relying heavily on its custom chips to perform vital operations, so problems with them will also cause problem crashes. The old CIA chips are prime suspects here. It may be the case that you will have to get your machine checked out by a proper technician.

Double drives

I currently have an A1200 tower with a Blizzard 030 board, 2 DD floppy drives, a HD drive and a 5.25" floppy drive. What I would like to know is if it is possible to add more than one drive off the internal floppy controller? If this is not possible, is there any hardware that would let me?

I have tried a floppy lead with a 2 x 34 way IDC connector, but it did not seem to work, as I kept getting DF0: ????. Is there any way I can get this to work? Can you help?

kris@brize.demon.co.uk

Unfortunately, there is no way you can connect more than one floppy of the internal floppy connector. It is simply a fact that it was only designed to take a single floppy drive, and any extra *have* to come off the external connector.

Upgrading

I own an A500 with a 1Mb memory extension, would like to fit a hard drive for speed and was wondering if you could help me? I mainly use my machine for games, house accounts, college assignments, teaching programmes and document layout for school purposes. I am a teacher and use my Amiga for weekly and termly planning.

Also, our black and white monitor really needs replacing. I hope to get a colour monitor – can you recommend any? Finally, could you comment on any advantages of these TV/Monitors as opposed to a monitor? Is it a case of it only being worthwhile buying a TV monitor if you want another TV?

Andrews, Bromham

A good old straightforward upgrade problem, again. Firstly, with regard to buying a hard drive, the only options for you nowadays with an A500 is to buy one of the external expansion port IDE hard drives, which normally cost around £200, and Siren seem to be one of the few places that actually sell these anymore.

If you do purchase a hard drive, you really should think about getting extra memory along with it, because every hard drive partition you have will eat a little extra memory, and you really should have two partitions – one around 15Mb for your Workbench files and the other for all your work files. The other inevitable thing is that because of the speed of a hard drive, you will end up adding lots of extra programs to your system, each of which will eat up a little more of your precious memory.

I think you should give good consideration to upgrading to an A1200. Second-hand ones with hard drives and extra memory can be picked up quite cheaply, and you should remember you will have OS 3 which makes quite a difference over 2.04, and a huge difference over 1.3.

If you want to get a monitor, the A1200 will also allow you to take full advantage of all its high resolution screens, which you would not be able to do with an A500.

With regards to TV/Monitors, I have been using a Philips Cube TV/Monitor for a good few years now because I never really needed high resolution modes, even though they would be nice. The picture quality you get through the SCART connection is very good, even though not quite up to monitor quality.

If you want to get a monitor for use with an A500, a TV/Monitor is more than enough, and you can always sneak a look at the TV when you get a bit board. If, however, you do get an A1200, then the new Amiga Technology monitor is as good as any other.

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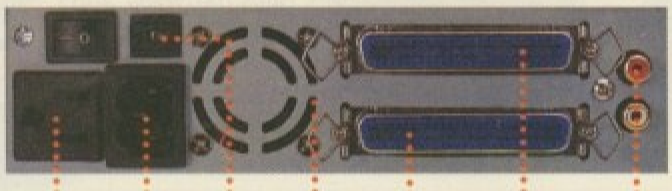
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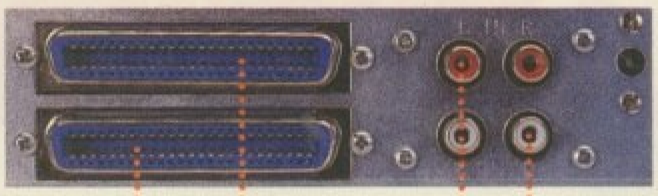
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- AGA Chipset
- 16.7 Million Colours
- Built-In Modulator

Monitor not included with A4000T



- 68040/25Mhz or 68060/50Mhz Processor
- 6MB RAM
- 1.2GB Hard Drive
- 1.76 Floppy Drive

TELEPHONE 01234 273000
FACSIMILE 01234 352207

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44A/B STANLEY STREET
BEDFORD MK41 7RW

.power

As Christmas looms in our collective highlights, its time once again to look for presents for our nearest and dearest. This year, why not consider bolstering the Amiga market and doubling up on your present buying? After all, a present for an Amiga owner of something to do with the Amiga is a present for the Amiga too (ahh!). So to help you, here is a selection of not-so-costly items for you to choose from for your favourite Amiga owner.

Christmas

Buy your loved one a sub!



No, not a U-boat, what about a subscription to the most excellent *Amiga Computing* magazine. With 13 packed issues every year, *Amiga Computing* is the most up-to-date Amiga mag on the shelf and you can have it delivered to your door before it becomes available in the shops. We are obviously biased towards our own magazine, but it really is good value because you can choose from one of four free gifts with the subscription.

He's a starman, living in the sky...



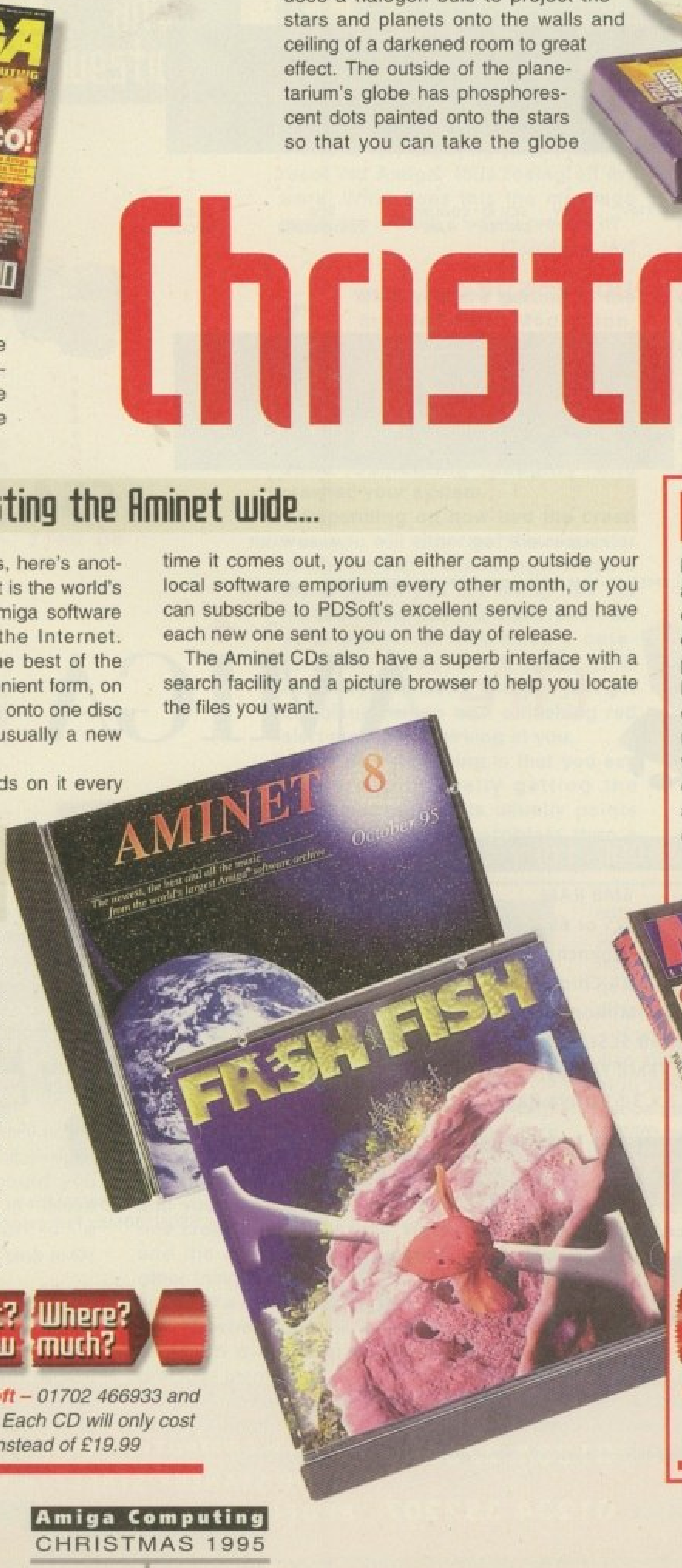
The astronomer in your life probably already has a copy of Distant Suns or The Digital Universe installed on his machine, but here's something a little different to accompany it. The Star Theater Planetarium projector is just like the big one in London, only a little less clever. Powered by a couple of AA batteries, the planetarium uses a halogen bulb to project the stars and planets onto the walls and ceiling of a darkened room to great effect. The outside of the planetarium's globe has phosphorescent dots painted onto the stars so that you can take the globe outside into the dark and have a guide to the night sky. The planetarium comes with an audio tape with a guided tour of the skies. While the tape is not really suitable for

Casting the Aminet wide...

While we're on the topic of subscriptions, here's another subscription idea for you. The Aminet is the world's largest archive of freely distributable Amiga software and is usually only accessible via the Internet. However, owing to popular demand, the best of the Aminet is now available in a more convenient form, on CD-ROM. The Aminet is far too big to go onto one disc and is constantly updated, so there's usually a new Aminet CD every two months or so.

To make sure you can get your hands on it every time it comes out, you can either camp outside your local software emporium every other month, or you can subscribe to PDSoft's excellent service and have each new one sent to you on the day of release.

The Aminet CDs also have a superb interface with a search facility and a picture browser to help you locate the files you want.



..To catch some fresh Fish

The other subscription offer from PDSoft is for the Fred Fish CD-ROM output called Fresh Fish. Fred Fish is the founder of the oldest and most famous Amiga PD and Shareware library which went to CD-ROM about two years ago. Even now, having your software available through the Fresh Fish series is a mark of excellence because each title is checked by Fred and his staff.

Unlike the Aminet CDs, Fresh Fish is released every three months and all the software on it is ready to run. The subscription offer takes much the same form for Fresh Fish as it does for the Aminet CDs, with you giving a credit card number to PDSoft who will only debit your card when they send out each CD.

What? Where? How much?

Contact: PDSoft – 01702 466933 and ask for details. Each CD will only cost £14.99 instead of £19.99

A means to an end

Next up is the Maplin catalogue, available from most good newsagents, or directly from Maplin themselves. The catalogue is included in this list, not as a present (unless you're feeling particularly tight), but as a guide to some of the other bits and bobs your Amiga user might want for Christmas. There's a whole range of things in here, from disk drive locks to CD storage units. There are leads and disks, power supplies and even non-computery stuff!



What? Where? How much?

Contact: Maplin – 01702 552911. The catalogue costs £2.95 and should be available from good newsagents

experienced astronomers, it would prove ideal for anyone interested in getting started in stargazing and contains a lot of historical information, for instance, what other cultures called the Pole Star, Big Dipper, etc.

What? Where? How much?

***Contact: Innovations** – 0181-727 3000. Item Code: INTB19037, price £29.95. If you want to also get Distant Suns, it is available from Emerald Creative – 0181-715 8866 at £27.95*

Are you sitting comfortably?

If you are still using the kitchen table for your computer, or a stack of books to prop up your monitor. What about getting a computer desk instead? Argos has a wide range of desks and office-type chairs to suit every pocket. All the ones shown here are self-assembly, so you can have even more fun working out how to put them together.



What? Where? How much?

Contact: Your local Argos store
Black ash trolley (611/4330) (also available in white (611/4945)) £44.50, Student's Desk (610/9682) £49.99 Swivel office chair (611/3915) £59.99

crackers

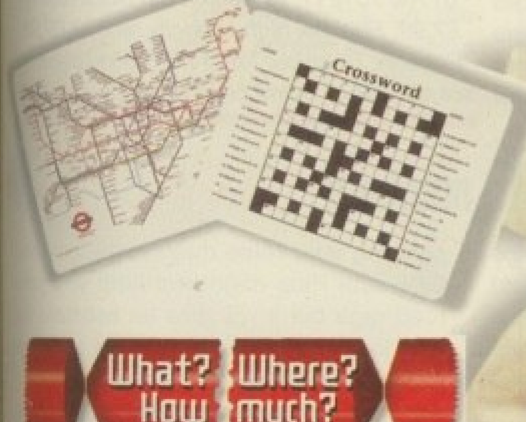
As is traditional at this time of the year in magazine land, we proudly present a selection of goodies to buy for the loved ones in your life who have Amigas



Mousemats with a difference

Instead of a boring plain mousemat, or one of those ones with a picture from StarTrek or a semi-naked woman, what about these two from the Science Museum. Stretch your brainpower with the crossword mat, or improve your London navigation skills with a full underground map which even includes telephone numbers for London Underground, just in case you need them.

By the way, the crossword mouse mat doesn't have the answers printed on it anywhere, but the surface should be cleanable as long as you use a water soluble felt-tip pen



What? Where? How much?

***Contact: Science Museum** – 01793 433500. Item Codes: TB22039 for the Crossword mat and TB21015 for the Underground mat – both priced £9.95.*

No reservations

Special Reserve is apparently the world's largest games club and offers discounts on software and hardware to its members. It costs £6 a year to join and Special Reserve have a special offer on membership at the moment where you can get a laminated mouse mat with a picture of Kelly on it or a copy of the hit manga video 'The Guyver – volume 1' when you buy any one item from Special Reserve's wide range of goodies.



What? Where? How much?

Contact: Special Reserve – 01279 600204. Membership costs £6 a year for the UK

Pump up the volume

If you really want to get pumping bass blasting out of your Amiga, then best not rely on your monitor's speakers. A groovy alternative is this set of active speakers by Goodman's. With 80 watts of music muscle powered from the mains, these speakers represent better value for money than most of the so-called multimedia speakers made by computer-oriented companies. The only thing to watch out for is the fact that they are not shielded, so don't put them too close to your monitor.



What? Where? How much?

Contact: Your local Argos store. Goodman's Speakers (535/5482) £59.9

How much is that floppy in the window?

Floppy drives have long been a staple item in the Amiga Christmas market. The only difference this year is that Gasteiner are selling them for the previously unheard of price of only £39.95. All are equipped with the standard features of any external unit of any note; pass through to connect further drives, on/off switch and slimline design. In addition, Gasteiner's drive is also equipped with an anti click and anti virus mechanism, usually only found on more expensive drives.

What? Where? How much?

Contact: Gasteiner – 0181-345 6000. External floppy drive £39.95

Safe as houses

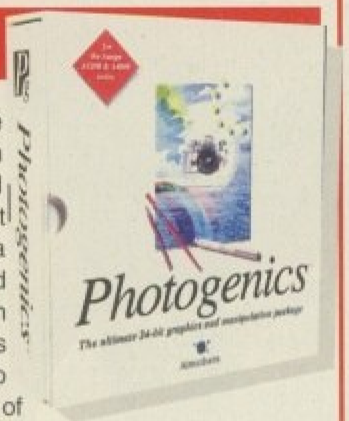
Ami File Safe is one of those techy things best bought for the most technically-minded Amiga user. It replaces the standard Amiga Fast File System (FFS) with a new, more flexible, faster and safer file system. Never more will your Amiga sit there validating its hard drive. You'll have faster file transfers and more CPU time available, and the peace of mind that comes with having a secure hard drive.

There are two versions of Ami File Safe, the User version and the Pro version. The only differences between the two versions is a size limit of 650Mb, only one hard drive and no Multi User Files System support, otherwise the User version is identical to the Pro. AFS will now also automatically translate between FFS and AFS so there is no more hard drive reformatting needed.

What? Where? How much?

Contact: Fourth Level Development – 0117 985 4455. Ami File Safe User is only £29.75 and the Pro version is £69.75

So very photogenic



Photogenics is probably our favourite piece of software this year. It has won awards in all the magazines and deservedly so. In case you haven't heard of it before, Photogenics is a true colour image processing and paint package designed mainly to run on AGA machines. It offers facilities often found on programs costing two or three times as much, and the list of features grows all the time.

Lucky people who are getting a new A1200 this Christmas will actually get a cut-down version in the bundle that comes with the computer, but upgrading to the full version is still worthwhile. You should be aware that Photogenics is best used on a machine that has at least 4Mb of RAM and a hard drive, but that notwithstanding, Photogenics represents superb value for money and should be in every budding artist's software collection.

What? Where? How much?

Contact: Almathera – 0181-687 0040. Photogenics is only £59.95

Fill 'er up, lad



If your favourite Amiga user owns an inkjet or bubblejet printer, then you will doubtless have heard them complaining about the cost of replacing the cartridges of ink once they have been used up. Fret not, a solution is at hand. Abcon Computer Services provide a service to users of such printers whereby you can buy refill kits for your cartridges.There are three ink kits, one black, one black high capacity, and one three colour kit, and two cleaning kits designed specifically for making sure inkjet printers are running at optimal rates. Each kit will fill the respective cartridge at least twice so that the high capacity black will fill a Hewlett Packard high capacity cartridge twice over. The prices for each kit are very competitive with typical savings of around £3-5.

What? Where? How much?

Contact: Abcon Computer Services – 01708 751211. Phoenix Twin black refill kit £7.99, Phoenix high capacity refill kit £9.9 Phoenix Tri-colour kit £11.99, 60ml cleaning solution £3.49, 60ml head recovery fluid £5

Road to nowhere

Your Amiga can even help plan road trips to your aunty Nell's with the aid of our next Christmas selection. GB Route Plus is a program that has been around a while now, but is still splendid and very useful for those taking long car journeys .

GB Route Plus also comes with a map editor so that you can update the data it uses in order to keep up with new bypasses, bridges and B roads. GBRoute Plus will print you out both a route map giving turn offs and junctions or a graphical map showing your route through the country. GBRoute Plus might not help you with road rage but it will give an estimate for how long your journey will take and how much petrol you will use.

What? Where? How much?

Contact: Silica – 0181-309 1111 for your nearest store. GB Route Plus costs £34.9

Are you seeing another computer?

You could always just buy another computer and some games for the Amiga user in your life. The Emulators Unlimited CD contains emulations for the Spectrum, C64 and various other platforms like the Mac, PC, VIC20, Atari ST and MSX. If that isn't enough, there are plenty of demos and games for all these computers on the CD as well, so as long as you can remember to hit 'J' to load a spectrum game and type 'load' to run that Commodore 64 game, you should be able to while away many hours in a fit of nostalgic reverie.

Comments will resound around the house to the tune of; "Games were so much better back then.." and "You see, it's not just the graphics, game play is important too." What joy!

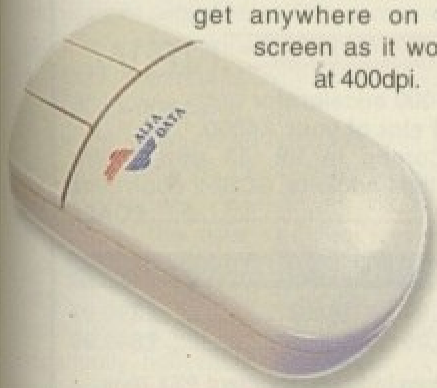
What? Where? How much?

***Contact: Epic** – 01793 490988 and ask for details. The Emulators Unlimited CD-ROM costs £19.99*

Three button mice, see how they run

Very well as a matter of fact. This is another item from those nice people at Gasteiner and is one of the cheapest pressies on this list. The mouse comes with an eight foot lead so even the most inappropriate positioning of the computer shouldn't affect usage.

This mouse has one button more than usual and this new middle mouse button can be used with a variety of software including Directory Opus, but is probably best used in conjunction with a commodity like MultiCX or MCP to provide added system functionality. The mouse is also really useful for anyone with a graphics card who is tired of having to drag the mouse miles to get anywhere on the screen as it works at 400dpi.



What? Where? How much?

***Contact: Gasteiner** – 0181-345 6000. Three button mouse £9.95*

Video killed the floppy disk backup



One of the worst things about being a conscientious Amiga owner is backing up your hard drive onto hundreds of floppy disks every so often. Even if you have the maximum four floppy drives allowable, you still spend half a day inserting and removing squares of blue plastic when you do it. It's no wonder people don't bother and then complain when their hard drive crashes.

There are solutions to this perennial problem. You can buy an expensive tape streamer or DAT drive, or you could go for Lyppens' Video Backup System. It's a combination of software and hardware that allows you to hook up your Amiga to any video recorder and send the contents of your hard drive onto video tape. You can fit up to 520Mb onto a four hour tape, and Video Backup System will also record a header showing a title, date and the location of the backed up files on the video for about five seconds before the backup data to make it easy for you to find the right tape when you want to restore. There are two versions of the Video Backup System available, one for videos equipped with phono sockets and one for SCART-equipped machines.

What? Where? How much?

***Contact: Power Computing** – 01234 273000. Video Backup System Phono costs £60 and the SCART version is £65*

Cheap rainbow



If your Amiga user pines about the fact that he or she cannot afford an AGA Amiga, there is now a solution at a remarkably low price. The Video DAC from Power Computing plugs into the monitor output of any Amiga and provides 18-bit output in resolutions up to 768 x 576 for a PAL display and 668 x 482 for NTSC.

There are limitations and the Video DAC is not a replacement for true AGA performance, but for still pictures and some animations, the Video DAC is a very low cost solution. The software that comes with it is designed to be as user-transparent as possible and can convert pictures and animations to the DAC format. In short, near 24-bit quality at a very low price.

What? Where? How much?

***Contact: Power Computing** – 01234) 273000. Video DAC only costs £25*

Printshop perfection



If your favourite Amiga owner is likely to benefit from the ink refills elsewhere on these pages, then he or she is even more likely to benefit from Wolf Faust's Studio II printer software. Studio II will drive any DeskJet, LaserJet or BubbleJet printer together with the Epson Stylus and most 24-pin dot matrix printers to give the most incredible printed output.

Part of the reason for this is that Studio II is the only printing software on the Amiga to offer a proper colour matching system to ensure your printed output matches what you can see on the screen, some of the rest is due to the fact that Studio II bypasses the 12-bit limit imposed on normal printer drivers by Workbench and gives true 24-bit colour output.

What? Where? How much?

***Contact: JAM** – 01895 274449. Studio II costs £49.95.*

Demonic possession

If you think your phone bill can stand the strain, and your favourite Amiga owner owns a modem, why not consider getting connected to the information superhighway that everyone is going on about? Demon Internet Services are one of the biggest ISPs (Internet Service Providers, you'll have to get into the jargon, man, there's loads of it on the net), offering local call access to most places in Britain. They are also pretty much the only provider to offer Amiga support, which is a must if you've never delved into that side of comms before.

The Internet is actually relatively cheap to access, costing only about £12 a month, but if you only have a slow modem (anything less than a modem capable of 14.4k baud is considered prehistoric) then it'll be the phone bills that kill you.

What? Where? How much?

***Contact: Demon Internet Services** – 0181-371 1234. If you choose to get a Demon subscription, why not accompany it with a subscription to IDG's latest magazine launch, The Web. Different to traditional Internet magazines, The Web is more like a Time Out for the net. Contact: IDG Media – 01625 878888. A 12 issue subscription costs £30, but there are other special offers.*



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3.5" IDE

540MB	12ms	£Call
630MB	10ms	£159.99
850MB	10ms	£179.99
1 GIG	10ms	£199.99
1.2 GIG	10ms	£229.99
1.6 GIG	10ms	£329.99

QUANTUM

3.5" IDE

270MB	12ms	£99.99
420MB	12ms	£Call
540MB	12ms	£Call
635MB	12ms	£159.99
850MB	12ms	£179.99
1 GIG	10ms	£219.99

3.5" SCSI-2

270MB	12ms	£149.99
540MB	12ms	£179.99
850MB	10ms	£219.99
1 GIG	11ms	£349.99

SEAGATE

3.5" IDE

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540MB	12ms	£139.99
850MB	10ms	£179.99
1.2 GIG	10ms	£249.99

SEAGATE DECATHLON

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1 GIG	10ms	£199.99
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2 GIG	10ms	£329.99

HITACHI — Amazing Prices

2.5" IDE

340MB	12ms	£169.99
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A500 ALFA POWER

270MB	£179.99
420MB	£219.99
540MB	£239.99
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EXTERNAL HARD DRIVES

A1200 OVERDRIVES

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420MB	£219.99
540MB	£229.99
850MB	£249.99
1 GIG	£269.99
1.2 GIG	£299.99

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EPSON

Stylus Colour inkjet printer offers photographic like quality when used with optional 720DPI printer drive (coated paper required). Built in auto sheetfeeder.
Only £369.99
Coated 720DPI paper (200 sheets) £22.99

STUDIO 2 - PRINTER S/W

Professional print studio for the Amiga. Enhance the output of your printer inc. 720DPI on Epson Stylus Colour.
Only £49.99

MODEMS

14,400 EXTERNAL

BABT approved FAX/Modem. Complete with all leads, PSU and Comms software.
Low Price £109.99

28,800 EXTERNAL V34

Super-fast BABT approved FAX/Modem. Complete with all leads, PSU and Comms software.
An unbeatable £174.99

A500/A600 RAM

A500 1/2MB N/Clock	£19.99
A500 1/2MB W/Clock	£24.99
A500+ 1MB	£29.99
A600 1MB N/Clock	£29.99
A500 1MB W/Clock	£39.99

LOGIC 3 SCREENBEAT SPEAKERS

SB 3 (10W)	£15.99
SB 6 (15W)	£19.99
SB 25 (25W)	£29.99
SB PRO 50 (50W)	£39.99
SB SubWoofer (50W)	£69.99
SB PRO 80 (80W)	£89.99

All speakers come with cables

ACCESSORIES

240 CAPACITY DISK BOX

The Logic3 stackable storage box holds up to 240 disks. Easy to assemble includes metal lock and keys.
Only £12.99
ASK FOR QUANTITY PRICES

ALFA DATA PRODUCTS

Megamouse-400dpi	£12.99
Megamouse-3 Button	£14.99
Auto J/Mouse switcher	£12.99
AT-Bus 2008/IDE	£79.99
AT-Bus 2008/SCSI	£109.99
AlfaPower/A500/IDE	£89.99
Tandem Controller	£49.99

CDROM DRIVES

VISAGE CDROM

External SCSI CDROM for the A1200. Plugs into the PCMCIA port, Fast 300Kb/Sec transfer rate. Connect up to six other SCSI peripherals.
Dual Speed £179.99
Quad Speed (600Kb) ... £239.99
the above includes Squiral
A400 version, as above but without PCMCIA interface (Dual Speed) £149.99

MITSUMI FX400

Internal IDE CDROM unit for the A4000 (requires tandem CDROM controller). Super-fast 600Kb/Sec transfer rate.
FX400 CDROM £149.99
FX400 Plus Tandem CDROM controller card £199.99

NEC 512 X6

Internal SCSI CDROM DRIVE. Incredible 900Kb/Sec transfer rate.
Only £314.99

VISAGE ATAPI CDROM

Please request your free news sheet regarding this amazing new product. External Quad-speed CDROM unit that plugs directly onto your internal IDE port (requires no additional interfacing).
Only .... £CALL

All 3.5" IDE drives require a 2.5" - 3.5" cable only £15.00 when fitted into a A600/A1200. Drives come prepped, formatted and installed with 100MB of FREE Public Domain software. All carry a 2, 3 or 5 year warranty.

If you have found a cheaper price elsewhere in the magazine, call us and we will do our best to beat it.

AMIGA 1200 "Magic"

The awesome new AMIGA 1200 "Amiga Magic" pack is here.
Software includes...

- Photogenics 1.2 SE, Personal Paint 4.6
- WordWorth 4, Datastore 1.1
- Digita Organiser/Print Manager
- Turbo Calc 3.5, Pinball Mania/Whizz
- PLUS FREE Mousemat and Dustcover

Call now to order yours...£389.99

Add £10.00 for Chaos pack includes: Syndicate, Pinball Fantasies, Chaos Engine & Nick Faldo's Golf

AMIGA 4000T

- 68040 25Mhz. Upgradable to 060.
- 1.2GB SCSI-2 HD/6MB RAM
- AT/IDE HD interface, SCALA MM300
- Call for details and -
- prices on 060 version
- Add £10.00 for Chaos Pack. £2149.99

Amiga M1438S MultiSync Monitor £279.99

APOLLO ACCELERATORS

APOLLO 1240/33/SCSI2 — Call For Details

The Apollo 1240 uses the latest QFP Motorola 68040 CPU (3.3volt).

33Mhz 68040 CPU including FPU & MMU
1 x 72 pin SIMM socket
Optional SCSI-2 controller, Real-time clock.
Price £439.99

APOLLO 1230/40EC

68030EC 40 Mhz
Optional 40Mhz PLCC FPU
1 x 72pin SIMM Socket, Real-time clock.
Price £169.99

APOLLO TURBO 1220

The 1220 combines the best Price/Performance ratio for any Amiga accelerator. 68020/28Mhz, 28Mhz 68882 FPU, 1 x 72pin SIMM socket (1-4MB), RTC
Price £99.99

APOLLO 620

The world's first A600 accelerator card is here ... 25Mhz 68020/68882, 1 x 72pin SIMM socket (1 - 8MB), Real-time clock, easy internal fitting
Price £139.99

APOLLO A4000/040/28/33/40 — NEW

The new APOLLO A4000 accelerator cards fit into the CPU slot of your A4000 (A3000 & 3000T). Comes in 28, 33 and 40Mhz versions, 4 x 72 pin SIMM sockets, SCSI-2 controller.
Price .... £CALL

32BIT MEMORY SIMMS

4MB	£129.99	16MB	£399.99
8MB	£249.99	32MB	£849.99

The above SIMMs are 72pin industry standard PS2 70ns.

HOW TO ORDER

BY POST - Please make cheques and postal orders payable to *"Visage Computers"*. Please allow 5 working days for cheques to clear.

WE ACCEPT ALL MAJOR CREDIT CARDS INCLUDING SWITCH & VISA DELTA

BY PHONE - Credit/Debit card orders taken from 9.30am – 5.30pm Monday to Saturday.

CALL (0115) 964-2828 OR (0115) 964-2898 TO PLACE YOUR ORDER

His master's voice

Ron Thornton reveals all as Paul Austin looks on in awe

Big Ron Thornton is far and away the most famous and prolific name in Amiga 3D. Thanks to his talents combined with the power of LightWave, the Amiga has been placed well and truly at the forefront of computer animation.

Courtesy of Babylon 5 and various exploits on the small screen, Ron has built a reputation for realism which sets Babylonian Productions apart from the madding crowd in 3D TV and film production. Combine an obvious gift for modelling with his unrivalled talent for texturing and dirtying down models and you arrive at the Ron Thornton look, which effectively has become a style in itself.

Given Ron's success, the really amazing thing is Ron's willingness to share his secrets, but that's what the latest duo of video's from Desktop Images are all about. Over the two tapes, running approximately 90 minutes a piece, Ron delivers all the tips you're every likely to need to produce the perfect space craft.

To illustrate the process, Ron takes us through the complete production run for one of his first LightWave creations, a model which originally took him almost three months to put together. Now, thanks to lots of practise, Ron can churn out the same ship in a little under four hours.

Although the two tapes are sold as separate entities, the reality is that they're pretty much inseparable if you really want to know what made this man the best in the business. The first tape, entitled Spacecraft Model Design, doesn't leave much to the imagination, with the vast majority of the instruction taking place in the Modeller. It takes you from the basic storyboard stage, right through to the final design complete with surface names and all the other essentials that any model needs prior to making its appearance in Layout.

In essence, the process is a simple one. Basically, you're offered a window into years of expertise as Ron reveals not just how to do various modelling takes but more importantly, why they're being done in the first place.

For the experienced user, many of the modelling methods being used will offer no real surprises. However, as with most art forms, the real skill isn't in the complexity of individual elements but rather the combination of simple building blocks into a bigger, better and, most importantly, believable end result.

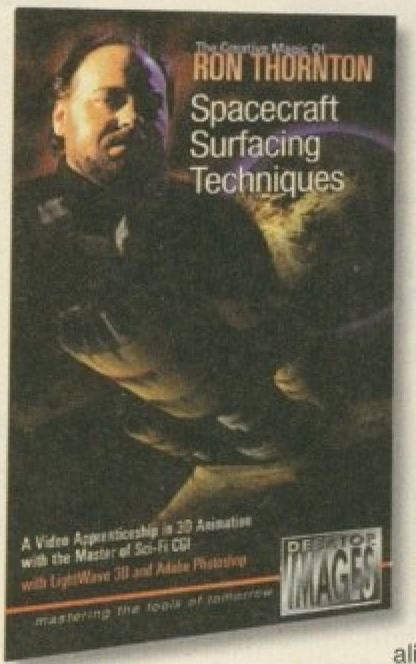
In short, it's the little wrinkles, hints and tips that make both tapes not only instructional but also insightful. You're sitting back and picking big Ron's brains as he drags, drops, points and clicks his way through the process, narrating 'the how and why' as it happens. The Space Craft Surfacing tape is perhaps the slightly stronger of the two. Although the design tape does offer lots of ideas and tricks of the trade, it's Ron's ability to texture and dirty down models that has really made him the main man in 3D modelling. Unfortunately, there's one aspect of tutorial that does make it a little unpalatable for hard core Amiga fans. Like many others, Ron has made the move to the PC in the endless search for speed. As a consequence, the texturing tutorial revolves around Adobe Photoshop, a program which is widely regarded as the best paint program on any platform – unfortunately Photoshop on the Amiga isn't an option – unless you're running the Mac version on your Amiga via ShapeShifter.

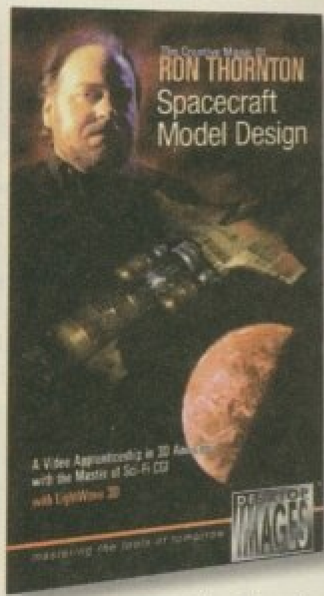
> **Ron has built a reputation for realism which sets Babylonian Productions apart from the madding crowd in 3D TV and film production**

Although this may sound disastrous, it isn't really such a mortal blow. Although the functionality differs, there's nothing that Ron does via Photoshop which couldn't be emulated with a bit of additional effort on the Amiga. The basic principle behind Ron's award-winning texturing skills is the combination of separate texture maps for the colour, specularity and defusion.

By producing variations on a basic theme all mapped onto the same axis, Ron achieves stunning realism, and it's this basic technique which is the key to high quality texturing and dirtying down.

AC





The bottom line

Products: Spacecraft Model Design
Spacecraft Surfacing Techniques
Supplier: Premier Vision
Price: £39.95 each
Tel: 0171-721 7050

On the whole

It's hardly surprising given Ron's experience that both tutorials couldn't honestly be described as the perfect introduction to LightWave or indeed Modeller. Quite rightly, Ron assumes a reasonable degree of basic knowledge for both programs.

If you're new to LightWave and Modeller, it's worth bearing this in mind before you sign the cheque. Desktop Images do a whole range of videos which go through the basics and if you're an outright beginner, it might be worth considering an additional investment.

To be honest, I was quite surprised that Ron is so frank concerning the finer points of his personal production process. After all, most 3D fans tend to guard their secrets jealously. Ron's step by step description of his texturing techniques is particularly enlightening, and in my opinion is essential viewing for anyone who wants to inject realism into extra terrestrial animation.

The only possible downside of Ron's guide to graphical excellence is his rather devil may care approach to system requirements. It's obvious that it's quite some time since Ron has suffered the 'not enough RAM available' horrors that most of us have simply learned to live with. Having said that, there's no reason that the basic skills relayed by big Ron couldn't be employed in a less grandiose manner.

The basic message for anyone who wants to transform the 3D cliché of sci-fi and space ships into a real jaw dropper is get both of the above ASAP – you won't regret it.

Amiga policenet

So the Amiga is back, and in a more serious guise than ever before. Once sold as the ultimate gameplayer's machine, Amiga Technologies know it can't compete against the super consoles this Christmas, so Jonathan Anderson's team are gunning for a much more mature market.

The trouble is it's going to be tough persuading companies to think of the Amiga as the ideal multimedia solution after the huge advertising campaigns staged on behalf of the PC in its various forms. The enthusiasts may know how powerful the Amiga is, but you can hardly expect large organisations and public services to choose it over systems more common in the commercial sector, can you ?

Well, maybe this story will change your mind, because on 23 October 1995, Cleveland police force went online with an IT network that pushes multimedia technology to a new level. And yes, you guessed it, the Amiga is behind the whole operation.

FORCED NETWORK

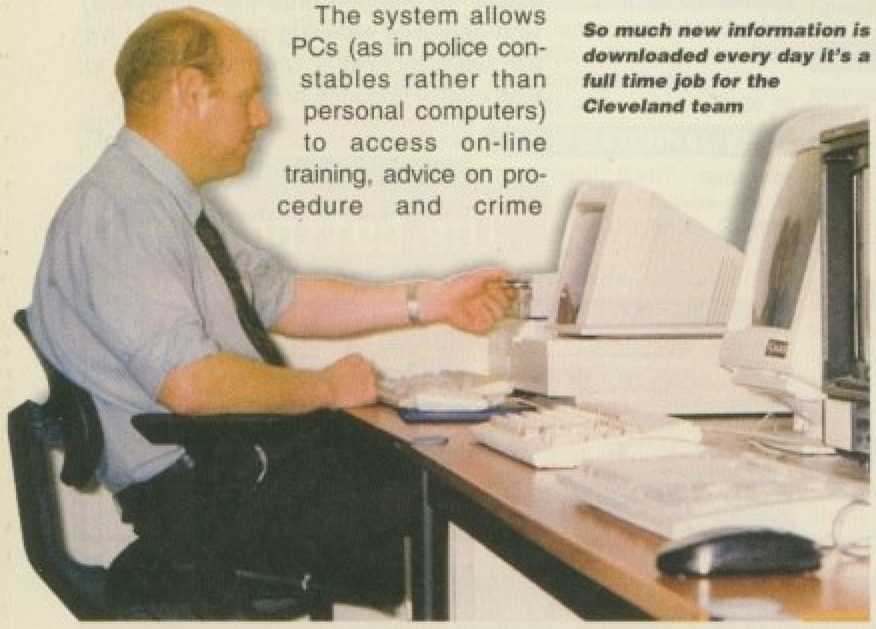
Every police station in Cleveland has now had Amiga-based information kiosks installed, all of which are networked together and controlled from the force's multimedia department. Like Amiga employee information systems used by other major companies, the system will provide a wide range of services to the policemen and women who use it. Nothing we know of, however, is anywhere near as far-reaching or advanced as the Cleveland project.

The system allows PCs (as in police constables rather than personal computers) to access on-line training, advice on procedure and crime updates, along with a whole range of social and entertainment services. The depth of content is astounding, which is probably why it took three years of full time development to complete.

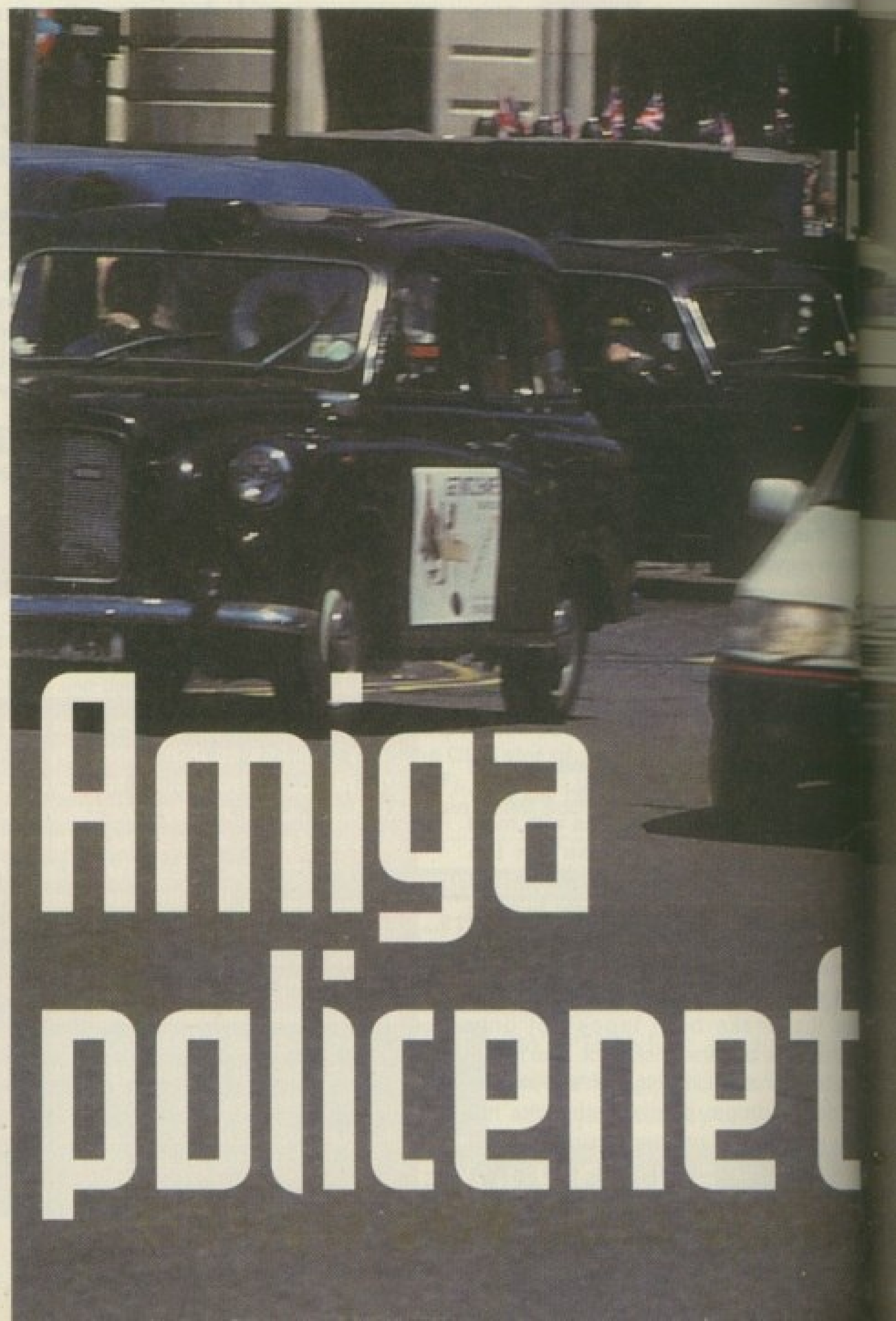
Each of the information kiosks contains an Amiga 4000, all of which are networked together so they can receive regular uploads of new information from the multimedia centre. Not surprisingly, the software used is Scala's top-of-the-range authoring software, IC 500.

Tom Keagan, head of the multimedia and AV department, explained the role the new network performs. "The ethos of the system is that we've wanted to get over the barriers of technofear," he said. "We believe the last thing an officer wants to do, having been on a case, is to start interfacing with a computer. So we've based this technology on touchscreens so they can easily access information without

> What we've done is to create a central receive point which is capable of receiving live real-time video from air support in the form of a helicopter or plane with an on-board microwave transmitter



So much new information is downloaded every day it's a full time job for the Cleveland team



Future cops

With the Amiga leading the way toward a more modern, technologically friendly police force for the 21st century, what other developments will affect the way they work ?

"Information technology in general is becoming one of the most vital tools the police have at their disposal," Keagan comments. Once again it seems Cleveland is leading the way, with a new microwave communication system due to come on-line by the time this issue hits the streets. Not remotely connected with convenience food cookers, this system will take police operations into realms previously reserved for sci-fi law enforcers. Keagan explained its purpose:

"We had a large fire on Tyneside at the beginning of the week at a large petrochemical factory. The potential for a major disaster there was huge – there was a large fire that could have caused a major incident.

"What we've done," he continued, "is to create a central receive point which is capable of receiving live real-time video from air support in the form of a helicopter or plane with an on-board microwave transmitter. They send pictures back to headquarters where

Going public

It's not just the police workforce to benefit from the Amiga's presence in the police stations. Two weeks after the phase one launch, more touchscreens will be installed in reception areas, and each of these will feature new packages tailored for the public.

People will be able to go into stations and instead of talking to the clerk on the front desk, they can get information from the kiosks. There will be information on documents they have to produce if they've committed a particular offence, careers advice, and public relations material, all of which will make it faster and easier for the public to make general enquiries.

there's a huge large screen projection unit. On top of that we overlay mapping systems with displays of all the resources available to the force.

"So real time pictures are fed back to the commander who's in charge, and he can see with his own eyes what's going on and co-ordinate his resources." The Amiga will even have a role to play in this field, however. Using the kiosk network, it will be possible to take that video footage, Mpeg encode it, and send it over the Amiga network down to the troops, so all the force will be able to see what's happening with a major incident. "It's all *real* time," Keagan emphasises. "The potential is phenomenal."



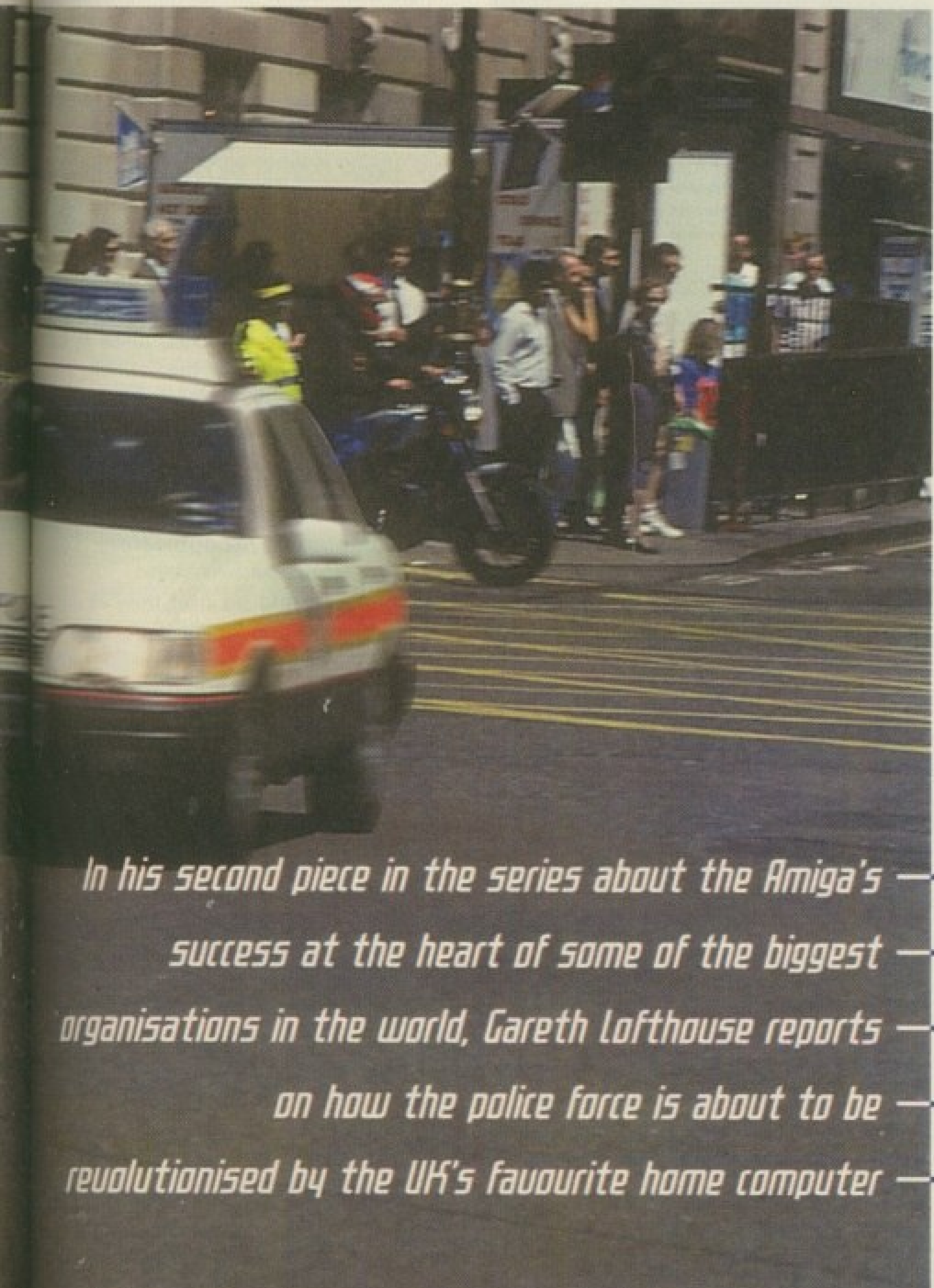
Tom Keagan taking Scala further than ever before

using a keyboard or a mouse."

So it's obviously user-friendly, but then touchscreen information systems are nothing new for the Amiga. The fact that this technology is modernising the way the police force works, however, hints at its potential. "We wanted to deliver full-screen information and real time video right down to the front end of the organisation," says Keagan. "Previously, a lot of information went around the force based on paper feeds and videos, without any guarantees as to whether anyone is watching or reading it."

"What the Scala package has allowed us to do is put an electronic flag on every individual electronic page that's accessed," he continued. "It means we can evaluate or monitor who's watching which services, when they're watching, and where they're watching them."

➤



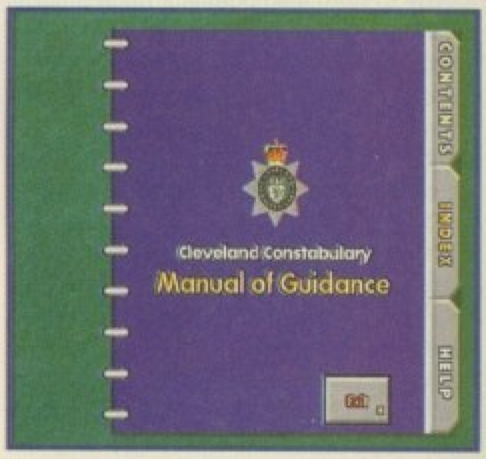
In his second piece in the series about the Amiga's success at the heart of some of the biggest organisations in the world, Gareth Lofthouse reports on how the police force is about to be revolutionised by the UK's favourite home computer



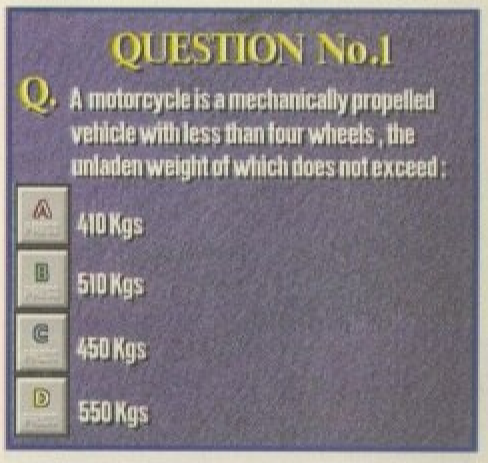
Large on-screen buttons mean officers don't have to deal with technofear after they've been out on a case



The system provides advice on all sorts of issues in a way that's 'visually friendly' as well as user friendly



In police work there are set procedures for everything, but this electronic book means advice can be quickly accessed



Quizzes are included both for fun and for serious test evaluation



Touchscreens for the public will include information on recruitment, or you can find what documents you need to produce if you've been done for speeding

Keagan is quick to point out it's not a case of 'big brother is watching you' however. Because they can evaluate whether a service is being used, they can tailor packages for users at each individual kiosk, and if a package isn't being used they can change it to suit them better. "That's what we've sold the package as," he argues. "It's not a management tool, it's about giving the workforce what *they* want to see on the system."

There's no denying that the technology will increase the efficiency of the Cleveland police force, however. Using Mpeg encoded video, they can now display intelligence information instantaneously in all the police stations. This means they can download colour photos of suspects, videos from security cameras, and other briefing material. "Traditionally, intelligence would be photocopied and faxed around the force," Keagan explains. "You'd be relying on black and white photocopies where you couldn't point out details like a scar on a suspect's face. Now we can do that in full colour."

WORK-TIME TRAINING

The system also boasts a huge amount of training including sections on everything from logistical updates to incoming legislation, all of which can be accessed whenever a PC has the time. This, incidentally, avoids the need for the PCs to be off duty for training courses so often.

The advantages of being able to deliver training directly into the workplace are matched by their ability to more closely monitor individual PCs' progress. Touchscreen quizzes have been designed to test users' understanding of the training, and their results can be uploaded back to HQ so their training can be re-evaluated.

Policy information will be one of the most important packages the Amiga kiosks are making available. Everything in the police force is done according to standing orders, and procedures must be followed in the event of each crime or incident. In Cleveland, however, all the policy information has been incorporated into the system in the form of a fully indexed electronic book. The benefit of this is that if an officer is on duty at 2am and needs advice on the procedure for a domestic burglary, he can access this information immediately from the touchscreens.

The developers have gone to great efforts to ensure it's an interesting service as well as a useful one, however, and most employees who have to make do with a boring weekly news sheet can feel justifiably jealous. In Cleveland's police force, the in-house printed magazine has now been put on to the network with electronic clips, and there's an electronic bulletin board which announces all types of social events. Officers can even get involved by sending in messages or news about events, all of which can easily be put on-line.

The national crimestoppers campaign that you may have seen on TV has also been incorporated with all the teletext reports and video bulletins. There are even competitions, an on-line telephone directory, news on staff discounts, and information on training courses available.

Even when they're not in use, the kiosks play a hot-loop of key news and messages, and everything gets updated so regularly, it's a full time job for one of the development team's operators. While Keagan rightly sings the praise of the Amiga and Scala, without which the system could not have been made, he does make the point that they've pushed the hardware and software further than anyone has taken it before. "When Scala themselves came to visit they said they'd never seen a script that was so complete, or seem so much done with IC500," he claims.

"Some of the things like the uploading of information from the kiosks, electronically flagging all of the pages, things like that, IC500 doesn't let you do it. We had to write software bridges, design all the artwork, all the content for the packages, the lot."

Impressive though it is at this stage, the Cleveland experiment could be just the beginning. Every police force in the country was invited to the launch, and some have already expressed interest in setting up a similar Amiga-based system. Because of the years of work it takes to develop the software, many of them hope to save time and labour by buying the completed product from Tom Keagan's team.

In fact, it could be that they've only begun to mine the Amiga's potential in this field. There's every chance the Amiga kiosk scheme will be adopted nationally by the police, but other large organisations could find such a system equally useful. "The council and other organisations have already approached us – like the fire service, for example," Keagan enthused. "At the moment I'm having to hold people off until this one's gone live."

Today Cleveland, tomorrow the world,' might be exaggerating things to a ridiculous degree, but there can be no doubt that the Amiga's credibility as a multimedia workstation will benefit enormously from its success in Tyneside. Thanks to people like Tom Keagan, maybe something will come of Amiga Technologies' multimedia ambitions after all.

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The national crimestoppers campaign publicised on TV is just another service that's been brought online

So why the Amiga?

Keating is an electronic technician by trade, and has had many years experience working with video, audio, multimedia and information technology. What made him choose the Amiga as the basis for the kiosk scheme ?

"Traditional IT systems rely on a client-server network, and the more people you have on that network the slower it gets," Keating told *Amiga Computing*. "Now all of our kiosks have their own A4000 which are networked for updating information and keeping it current. So we can have one person or everyone on the kiosks and the speed is not affected."

The AV team had been using Amigas long before the inception of the kiosk scheme, however. An A4000 with an onboard PAR card was being used for video briefings and they used Scala for slide-based presentations. In fact, it was this latter application that convinced the team of the Amiga's potential and economy.

"We found that rather than producing 35 mil slides," he said, "we could do a complete Scala package with photos and text, etc., on a simple A1200 which could then be given to a police officer for presentation use in youth clubs and in the community. All they had to do was connect it up to a telly. From there on things just kept developing and developing."

But had he considered other platforms, we asked. "Obviously we looked at the whole range, from PCs to MACs," Keagan replied. "While everyone was good at different things, the Amiga's graphic capabilities were absolutely phenomenal compared to the other systems."

What's most impressed the team, however, is the fact that they've got the whole kit, including all the A4000s, the touch screens, the Mpeg encoder and control system installed at the cost of £150,000. That may sound like a lot of money, but Keagan insists it's good value. "Compared to the cost of most IT systems that's peanuts," he says. "We think we'll have recuperated that investment by selling our software in no time."

Scala Infochannel

Scala IC 500 is the software that makes the Cleveland kiosk scheme possible. Better known as Info channel, IC 500 is Scala's multimedia authoring system for networks, and it's already been used to great effect as an employee information system by Ford.

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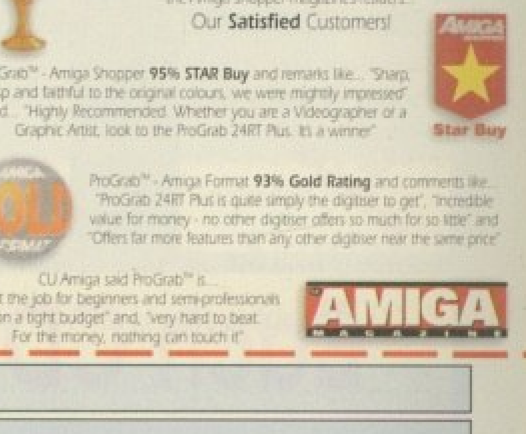
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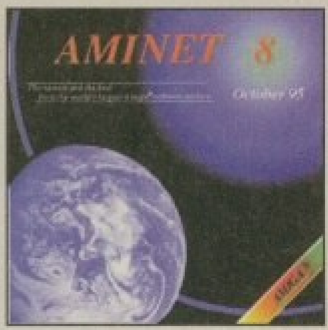
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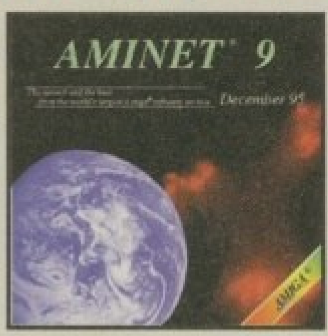
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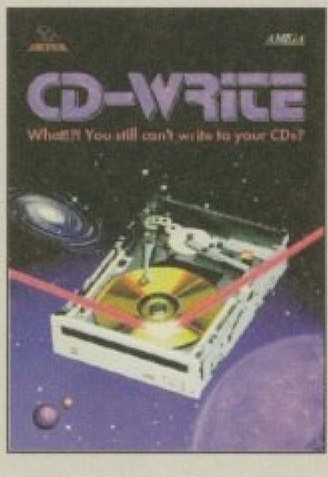
Aminet 8

Aminet CD 8, dated August 1995, consists of approximately 1,1 gigabytes of software in 3600 archives. Since the release of Aminet CD 7 more than 540 MB new software has appeared. The current edition has a spécial focus on modules, more than 1000 mods from Aminet were included. User friendly access software makes the Aminet CD 8 a pleasure to use. £14.95



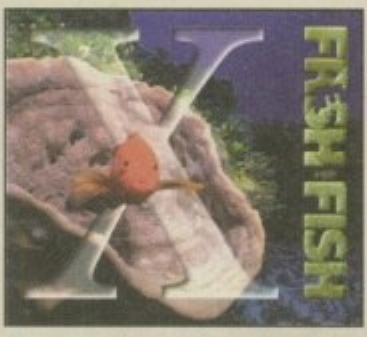
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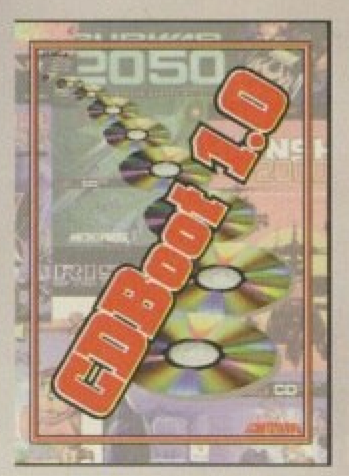
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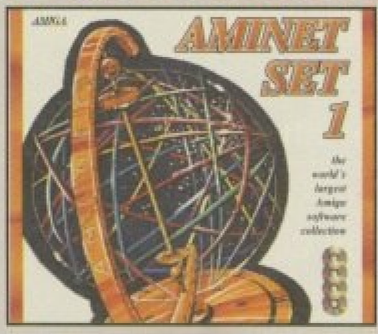
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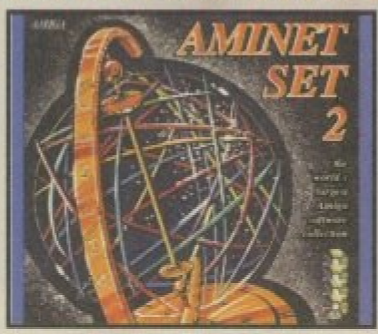
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CDBoot is a fantastic new product that enables you to use almost any CD32 games on an A1200 or A4000 (with AT- or SCSI-CD-ROM drive and any filesystem). You can create a configuration file for each CD, containing information on the Joypad emulation. You can also save the highscore of each CD32 game. The usage and installation of CDBoot is very easy, also for beginners, due to the excellent English manual. Since the compatibility is very high, you can use 98% of CD32 games currently available. CDBoot is an excellent software solution for all Amiga-Freaks, who would like to enter the world of CD32 games! £34.95



Aminet Set 1

Aminet is the world´s largest collection of freely distributable Amiga software. Up to 10.000 users access the vast archives ervery day and countless programmers publish directly via Aminet. Until recently access to Aminet was restricted to international network users. With Aminet Set 1, consisting of 4 CDs, the complete archive is published the first time. This CD-ROM-collection, which is dated January 1995, offers an almost inexhaustible reservoir of top-value Shareware. A wide variety of programs is included: Applications, Games, Demos, Pictures, Mods, Animations, Developer-Material, ... It contains approximately 4 gigabytes of software in 12.500 archives and you will enjoy the comfortable user-interface. £29.95



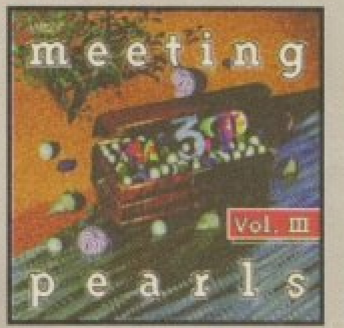
Aminet Set 2

AMINET SET 2, dated November 1995, consists of approximately 4 gigabytes of software in 12.000 archives. Whether you like applications, games, communications or programming, the SET gives you all you need. Easy to use index files and search facilities make accessing it a pleasure. £34.95



Gamers' Delight II

This CD contains 1070 games for the Commodore Amiga from differing categories. Action, Jump & Run, Card Games, Puzzles, Strategy Games - a whole range of computer entertainment awaits! Gamers' Delight will hold you captivated for hours and guarantees long-lasting pleasure. 70 games are commercial versions - no public domain & no demos! This CD can be run on any Amiga with CD-ROM drive, 1 MB free memory and Joystick/Joypad. £26.95



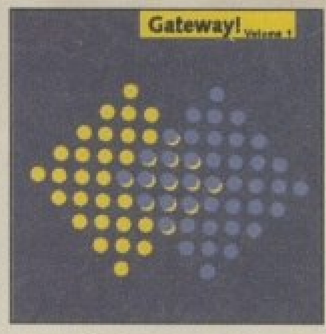
Meeting Pearls Vol. III

The Meeting Pearls Volume III contains 650 MB of the finest FD software via a special user interface, which has been created to allow you to find the program of your choice with ease. The contents: 10 MB Packer, Cruncher, Archive Programs · 3 MB CD-ROM Utilities · 21 MB Communication and Network Programs · 5 MB Debugging Tools · 29 MB Development Tools · 13 MB Floppy, Hard Disk ans SCSI Programs · 8 MB Educational Programs · 9 MB Games · 35 MB Graphics Programs · 39 MB Internet Movie Database, Updated Version · 7 MB Midi Tools and Programs · 27 MB Mods · 12 MB Music Programs · 21 MB Pictures · 13 MB AmiTCP and more for Networking · 60 MB Documentation, CD-ROM Databases, etc. · 96 MB PasTeX 1.4 - not previous available on any CD-ROM · 15 MB Utilities · 30 MB HTML-Pages · Collections of datatypes, benchmark programs, icons, programs for amateur radio and electrical/electronic engineering are also included. £9.95



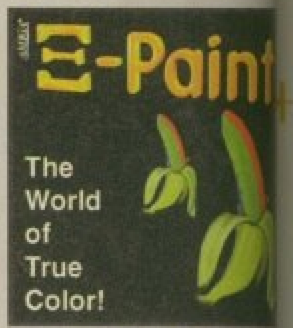
da capo

The da capo CD-ROM is a source for high-quality music, both for listening enjoyment and for samples to use in creating your own music. This is not just another random collection of modules. Many modules and samples are exclusively to da capo. Included are more than 1400 of the best available modules and 2000 high-qualiaty samples. £27.95



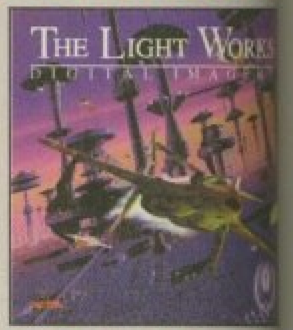
Gateway!

Gateway! offers NetBSD 1.0, a full featured UNIX-like operating system with both sources and binaries for the Amiga, i386, Sun 3, and other architectures. Go netsurfing with the large selection of supplied networking tools. Other supplied packages include a binary release of the X window system (X11R6) for the Amiga, with many additional clients, and packages such as perl, emacs, games, mail programs, and many megabytes of important text files such as RFCs and FAQs. A complete installation guide is available on the CD. There are also some AmigaDOS internet utilities, such as clients for AmiTCP and Envoy. £9.95



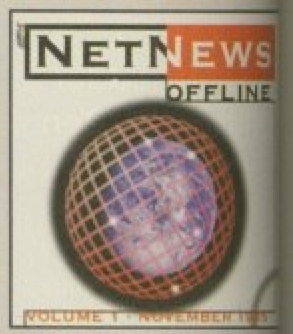
XiPaint V3.2

XiPaint is a leading edge, 24-bit paint program ... demands of novice and expert alike, and within a ... too will be able to produce colourful and creative ... colours. This version of XiPaint provides a professional ... at an unbeatable price/performance ratio.
Overview of Features: · Diverse paint functions ... contrast and saturation adjustment · Mask, outline, ... functions · Airbrush with adjustable spray function ... function for manipulating montages and animations ... with anti-aliasing using Compugraphic fonts · Support ... graphic formats · Unlimited Undo · Diverse manipulation ... channel · Supports many graphic cards · Layers to ... projects · ARexx port · Drag & Drop colours · External ... Extensive documentation · 60 textures, 30 landscape ... pictures and many fonts included. £49.95



The Light Works

Raytracing - A fascinating area of the computer ... from the computer, perfectly rendered, fascinate people ... world. The Amiga was the first computer to be used ... and today it is still a leader, with many high quality ... artist of raytracing is Tobias J. Richter from Cologne ... whose detailed objects stun the people. Especially ... famous science fiction films are used to demonstrate ... of a raytracing program. The objects are highly ... extremly realistic due to the application of complex ... of the models. Until now it was difficult to acquire ... order to create ones own scenes or animations. £29.9...



NetNews Offline Vol. 1

NetNews Offline Vol. 1 is the first disk of a new ... series of Amiga CD-ROMs which contains all Amiga ... groups from the internet. Every volume features ... articles which contain hot rumours, important information ... aspects of the Amiga, press-releases, discussions and ... A newsreader is included. NetNews Offline is the cheap... of getting in touch with Usenet. £14.95

All products are available in your local Amiga-sh... or through national mail-order-companies

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Sixty-forty split

The new A2000- 060/040 card is about the most flexible accelerator for the old Amiga workhorse. Stevie Kennedy visits the test track



If you're a power user and you think the 68040 is looking a little on the slow side these days, then you'll have an eye on the 68060 chip with its mouth-watering 90 mips potential. On the other hand, there are an awful lot of A2000s in use as work-horses for everything from presentation to video and 3D work, and many of them get by on the 68030 or even the original 68000.

Upgraders have seldom had the choice to take a gradual speed upgrade from one chip to another because boards are usually built around a specific type of CPU, which can often leave users stuck with what they've got. With the new Power Computing A2000-040/060, the opportunity is there to go for the 040 then bump up your power to 68060 standards at a later date.

Originally a GVP project and now manufactured by TekMagic, this particular card is a flexible and sensible design which can be configured in a number of different ways. CPU choice extends to the 33MHz and 40MHz versions of the 68040 as well as the 50MHz 68060, and there are no less than eight SIMM slots in two banks of four.

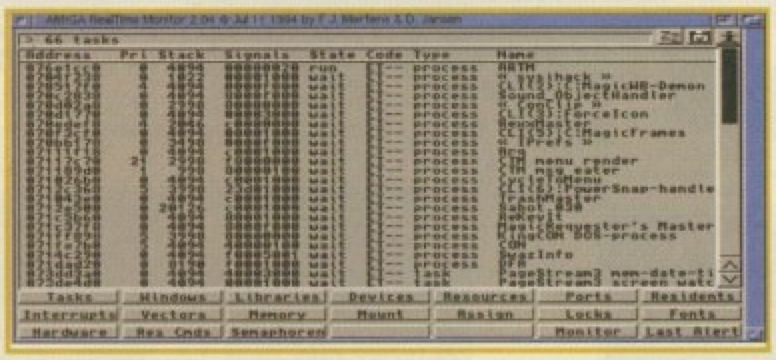
Why eight slots? Well, as any GVP owner will tell you, the American Amiga giant's memory modules are non-standard in size. To retain compatibility with any existing GVP cards, the A2000-040/060 has four GVP slots and four industry-standard 72-pin slots. This means that if you already have a GVP accelerator such as the old 68030 models, you can use your old SIMMs and mix them with cheaper and more readily available standard modules.

Mounted in pairs, the SIMMs can be configured for anything between 2Mb and 128Mb of 32-bit RAM, and as the pairs are mounted across the two types of slots, the pick 'n' mix principle applies. Only four of the eight slots can be occupied at any one time, but this can include two 72-pin SIMMs and two GVP SIMMs, or any other combination – as long as the banks aren't split across the two types. If the first bank of the 72-pin slots is used for a 4Mb SIMM, then the first bank of the GVP slots cannot be used, the GVP SIMM being placed in bank 2 instead.

This sounds a little confusing, but it's a simple enough rule to follow and the manual, though brief, has plenty of detail on configuration and jumper settings to get you through. Further expansion comes in the shape of the built in SCSI-2 interface which has both an internal and an external pass-through connection. Driven directly from the on-card CPU, this is a blisteringly fast interface with a theoretical maximum of 10Mb per second transfer speeds.

Our test model – due to the manic demand for and short supply of 68060s – was supplied with a 68040, so we can't bring you the board's fastest timings. Previous *Amiga Computing* tests of 50MHz 68060 chips have confirmed the new CPU's 90 Mips top speed, though, and the chip will perform just as fast on this board as on any other.

With its flexible upgrade options and SCSI-2 interface, simple jumper settings, and solid design pedigree, the latest card from Power Computing is one slot-in rejuvenation we can recommend to any A2000 power user. Just wish they'd let us keep it...



Software supplied with the card is simple, including a Kickstart remapping program and the useful Amiga Real Time Monitor utility. A far cry from early 68040 cards which often needed extensive software crutches

SYSTEM ESSENTIALS

RED = Essential **BLACK** = Recommended



The bottom line

Product: A2000-060/040
Supplier: Power Computing
Price: £tba
Phone: 01234 273000

Ease of use	**9**
Implementation	**9**
Overall	**9**

Internals on the 060

Pipelining and 'superscalar' are two jargon terms you'll see being applied to the 68060 and other modern chips, but though they cover very complex and advanced techniques in microprocessor design, they are simple concepts at heart. Just don't ask a chip designer to explain them to you.

In a traditional CPU, the stream of instructions arriving to be processed are taken one at a time and processed completely before the next one is dealt with. As this entails many smaller steps within the CPU itself, each part of the microarchitecture sits around waiting for the next instruction once it has done its bit and passed the instruction on. Think of it as a dumb 'pass the parcel' game where only one parcel circulates at a time. In a pipelined CPU, there can be as many parcels as you have people passing them on. When an instruction has gone past the first stage in the pipeline the second instruction can be started on, which means that the various parts of the CPU are working much more of the time and efficiency increases.

Superscalar is a term applied to chip architecture and goes beyond simple scaling down of the size of a circuit. In effect, a superscalar chip makes use of parallel processing to give incoming code two or more execution paths so that more than one instruction can be processed at a time. When combined with pipelining, this approach has been responsible for much of the incredible speed increases we've seen since 1990.

The 68060 has separate paths for data fetch and operations, with four-stage pipelining on each backed up by two 8k caches which use the advanced (maximum speed with minimum cache misses) four-way self associative method. All this breaking things down and juggling two or more instructions at once demands that the CPU has a great deal of internal intelligence, but the beauty of this system is that the software doesn't have to worry too much about traffic control. As long as the hardware keeps a careful eye on timing and pipeline organisation, everything moves along smoothly.

Turbocharged

Frank Nord was surprised to see a text editor better than Turbotext, but relieved that it was Turbotext 2

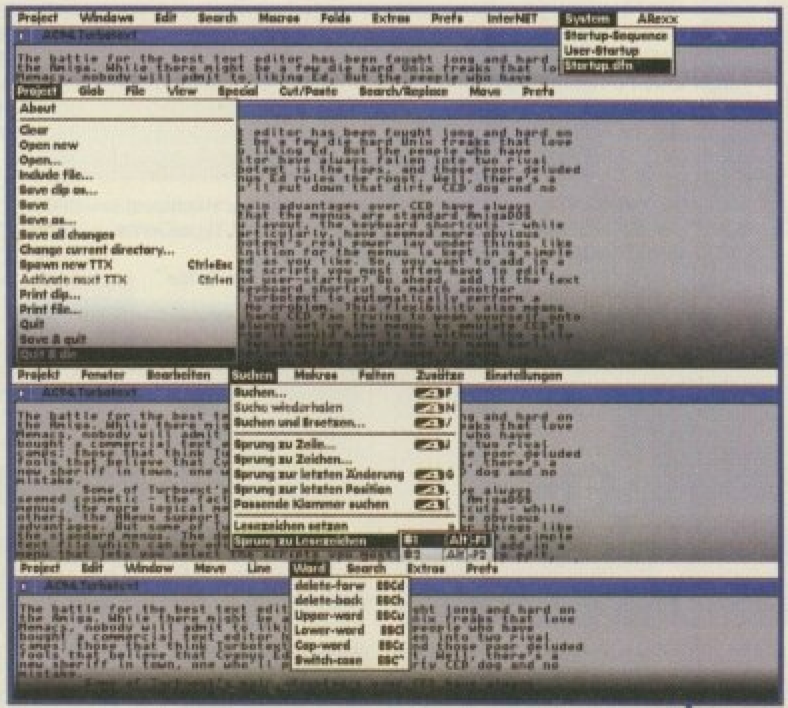
The battle for the best text editor has been fought long and hard on the Amiga. While there might be a few die hard Unix freaks that love Memacs, nobody will admit to liking Ed. But the people who have bought a commercial text editor have always fallen into two rival camps; those that think Turbotext is the tops, and those poor deluded fools that believe that Cygnus Ed rules the roost. Well, there's a new sheriff in town, one who'll put down that dirty CED dog and no mistake.

Some of Turbotext's main advantages over CED have always seemed cosmetic – the fact that the menus are standard AmigaDOS menus, the more logical menu layout, the keyboard shortcuts – while others, the ARexx support particularly, have seemed more obvious advantages.

But some of Turbotext's real power lies under things like the standard menus. The definition for the menus is kept in a simple text file which can be edited as you like. So, you want to add in a menu that lets you select the scripts you most often have to edit, like the startup-sequence and user-startup? Go ahead, add the text file. You want to change a keyboard shortcut to match another program? Go ahead. You want Turbotext to automatically perform a function when it starts up? No problem.

This flexibility also means that if you *are* a die hard CED fan trying to wean yourself onto a superior editor, you can always set up the menus to emulate CED's oddly laid out ones (of course it would have to be without the silly fonts and the menu that has two starting points on the menu bar). Turbotext actually comes supplied with a nice range of menu definitions to help you in your task, including emulators for CED, Wordstar and a special layout for users of the Northgate Amiga keyboard (which is actually a PC keyboard especially designed for Amigas, if you know what I mean).

These definition files don't just include the menu definitions, which could, of course, be in any language, they also contain other information such as dictionaries and templates for Turbotext's word correction and template completion functions



which are absolutely vital to programmers in a hurry.

Another nice feature of Turbotext's definition file is that not everything has to be bunched in the same file. You can have links inside your definition file that tell it to look elsewhere for further definitions. This means that you won't need to keep editing a dictionary file for each definition you set up, you can simply link to one main file from each of your defined definitions.

Turbotext's manual is something of a disappointment. Oh, the manual is fine. It's clearly laid out, well-written and logically organised. It's also extremely out of date. The manual supplied with every copy of Turbotext v2 actually applies to Turbotext v1.0. This isn't a complete balls up however, as Turbotext 2 now comes with a complete online, context sensitive amigaguide manual which is as up to date as possible.

And because of the fact that Turbotext 2 is only really improved and not actually radically changed, you could still read the manual provided on the train and make sense of it. I do think, however, that for the money you are paying for Turbotext, you ought to get an up-to-date, printed manual.

> Some of the real power lies under things like the standard menus. The definition for the menus is kept in a simple text file which can be edited as you like

The final word

The only problem with Turbotext, or indeed CED, is getting people to pay for its superb features. I think there is a perception in the Amiga community that paying money for such an everyday tool is a bit odd (file managers seem to fall in the same category). Nobody has a problem with paying out fifty quid for a word processor, but no-one seems to want to lash out the same kind of cash for a high-powered text editor. Turbotext's added speed and increased compatibility with WB2 and 3 mean that it is the best choice for a modern text editor. Buy it.

cAsE CoRrEcTiOn – wHaT FOR?

Turbotext includes a superb feature for typists who accidentally leave the caps lock key on, for programmers working in a language which is case dependant, and for people who regularly spell the word the teh. What it does is compare each word with a list of words in its definition file (suitable definitions are set up for ARexx, C, Modula 2, COBOL, BASIC and Assembler) and change its case or spelling if necessary.

The beauty of this is that a huge dictionary of words that are never going to be used when you are programming doesn't have to be loaded. If you have words which you regularly misspell (for me it's always chnage instead of change), then this feature is a godsend and much faster than having to spellcheck the document.

Turbotext also offers a more manual method of dealing with character transposition and case correction in the two macros assigned, by default, to the F3 and F4 keys. Hitting F3 toggles the case of the letter under the cursor, and hitting F4 swaps the letter under the cursor with the preceding one. Much faster than having to backspace and retype.

SYSTEM ESSENTIALS

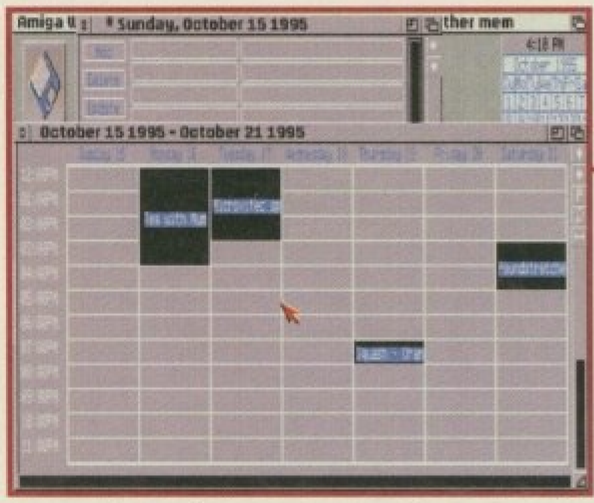
RED = Essential **BLACK** = Recommended

RAM	Kickstart
1 Mb	2.04

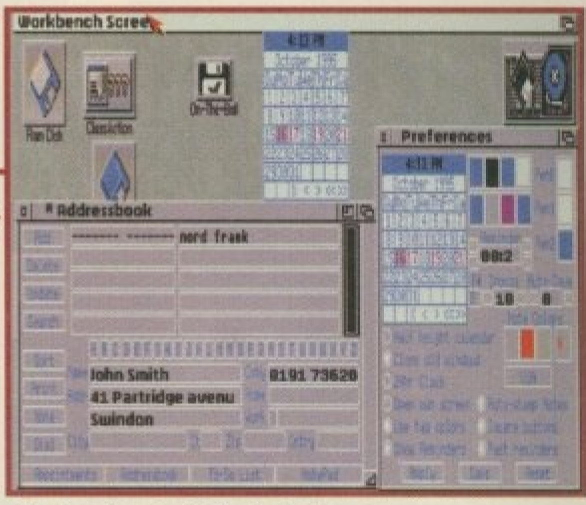
The bottom line

Product: Turbotext v2
Supplier: HiSoft
Price: £59.95
Tel: 01525 718181

Ease of use	**8**
Implementation	**10**
Value for money	**7**
Overall	**9**



Your weekly appointments are conveniently summarised in an at-a-glance view



The interface is fiddly, but at least there are a lot of preference options

Ball control

No, not another football management game, but rather a commercial organiser to take on Digita's Organiser. Cheaper it may be, but is it any good ? Gareth Lofthouse found out

Appointments, time schedules, reminders of tasks to be done – these are things most of us don't want to think about as Christmas nears, but nevertheless that's what On the Ball is all about. Still, instead of the standard stocking filler of the 1996 diary, it's worth considering buying Hi-Soft's new organiser for your best loved Amigaphile.

Like Digita's Organiser, On the Ball is a calendar, address book, to do list, appointment reminder and notepad all in one. Unlike the Digita rival, however, it bears no visual resemblance to a physical filofax, so you can forget all about a glossy GUI.

On the Ball does, on the other hand, have a competitive range of features, and the interface has some advantages despite its lack of glamour. The program is all accessed from a tiny calendar window you can constantly have in the corner of Workbench, making it convenient to access in the middle of working on another task.

Clicking on a date opens the multi-application window from which all the different sections of the organiser are accessed. It's at this point that the program can seem most unattractive thanks to the rather old fashioned appearance of the interface. However, moving between the sections or backwards and forwards through dates is very simple, although it's not so instinctive a process as it is in Organiser.

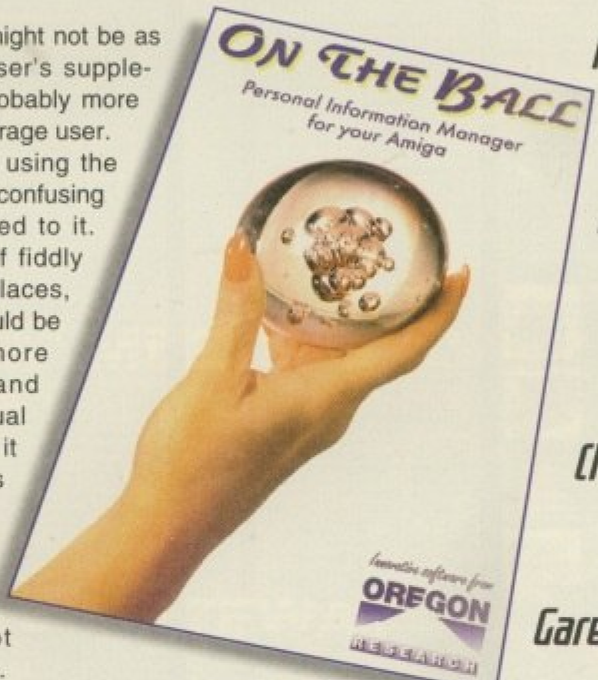
The Appointment utility is one of the most useful features in the program. As you'd expect, it allows you to plan your week out, but the at-a-glance schedule gives users a visual breakdown of their appointments that is more detailed and helpful than Organiser's approach – even if it is less pretty.

TIMESAVERS

There are timesaving features such as the option to automatically repeat regular appointment entries, and the reminder function works better than on other packages. With On the Ball, messages will appear on Workbench accompanied by sound samples to jog your memory, and you can set the time of reminders very precisely. There is also a snooze option so the reminder will come up again, and you can set it to launch programs automatically at a particular time.

The to do list includes its own text editor for cut and paste jobs, and again, reminders can be attached to each item. The address book features a convenient Rolodex layout and has mail merge plus search and sort capabilities that will make it a handy area of the overall package. Finally, there's the notepad where you can jot down other forms of information, though in appearance this is On the Ball's most scrappy element.

Customisation is possible using the labels or 'Tags', thus allowing you to create new categories like birthdays or business and identify it with a unique colour or symbol. This might not be as fancy as Organiser's supplements, but it's probably more useful to your average user.



To be honest, using the interface can be confusing until you get used to it. There are lots of fiddly buttons in odd places, making what should be simple tasks more complicated, and though the manual makes sense of it all it still seems unnecessarily awkward. Another moan arises from the fact that it's not fully font sensitive.

A final point to note is that there's not much point buying this if you don't have a battery for a clock to keep the program up to date. These often come on accelerator boards or you can buy a Turbotech clock for about £20 from Siren Software.

Verdict

As I've said in previous reviews, the whole concept of computerised organisers is slightly dubious. None of these programs is quicker, easier to use, or more helpful than using a real filofax, and people aren't going to boot up their Amigas every time they want to check the time of an appointment.

If, on the other hand, you spend a lot of time in front of your Amiga, it does make sense to have such a program on hand. On the Ball's strength is that it sits unobtrusively in the corner until you need to use one of its facilities.

Of course, it lacks the polish and simplicity of Organiser, and if they were the same price then it's the Digita program I'd be buying. On the Ball is still a decent package, however, and being much cheaper it will justifiably appeal to Amiga users who balk at the thought of shelling out £50 for an electronic filofax.

SYSTEM ESSENTIALS

RED = Essential **BLACK** = Recommended

1.3+ Workbench

The bottom line

Product: On the Ball
Price: £29.95 + £3 p&p
Supplier: Hi-Soft
Tel: 01525 718181

Ease of use	**7**
Implementation	**7**
Value for money	**8**
Overall	**7**

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EDUCATIONAL

(N.B. This includes some games)

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E180	GCSE Maths	Syllabus taught disk
E185	Astronomy	Calculates positions of planets
E193	Astronomy	A total concept disk
E234	Colour The Alphabet	Educational spelling game
E271	The Highway Code	All you need to know
E023	Electronic Train Set (1 meg)	Construct own train set
E061	Pick up a Puzzle (2 disks)	Fit the pictures
E079	Treasure Hunt	Great Kids game
E088	Pair Crazy	Good puzzle game for kids
E271	Dinosaurs	Quiz on Dinosaurs
E298	States of Europe	Information on this continent. Good
E299	Communicate	Learn how to use sign language
E311	The Internet	A guide to the Internet
E312	Learn French	French verb tester
E315	Learn & Play 3	Education & Games
E331	Jigsaw (2 disks)	Match the Pieces into a Jigsaw
E339	Dunks DTP	Desktop publishing for kids
E349	Picture Maths	Graphical maths tutor
E350	Barney the bear (2 disks)	Learn & meet animals
E410	Birthday History	Gives details of events on your birthday. Good

BUSINESS SOFTWARE

B089	Journal	Accounts program
B118	Amiga Fox	Very popular spreadsheet
B136	Amibase Prof	Excellent database
B137	600 Business letters	Ready to print
B140	Text Engine	Excellent word processor
B153	File-a-fax	As it sounds
B154	QED	Beginners word processor
B175	Text plus VERSION 4	Excellent word processor
B232	Cheque Book Account	Keep tabs on your expenditure
B240	Little Office	Word Proccessor, Database & Spreadsheet
B323	Onform	Invoice maker
B330	Easycalc	Excellent spreadsheet

CREATIVE + GRAPHICS

C040	Fonts Galore (4 disks)	100's of fonts
C130	Label Designer	Various label printers
C197	Clip-art	Stars/Logos/Explosions etc.
C198	Clip-art	Valentines and weddings
C200	Clip Art	Christmas
C206	ABC Adventure Creator (N)	Create your own adventure games
C231	Audio Animation Studio	Create Cartoons
C236	Word Power	Solve crosswords & anagrams
C256	Print studio	Multi purpose printer utility
C258	Garden designer	Create your own garden excellent graphics
C263	League Database	Easy-to-use football editor
C322	Lion King (3 disks)	Good Disney clip art
C331	Signature Creator	Customise your signature
C389	Turbocat (not 1.3)	Top quality cataloguer

MISCELLANEOUS UTILITIES

M210	Pools Pools Version 2	Work out your winnings
M241	Winemaker	Database for wine lovers
M244	Lockpic V2.0	Uncover copy facilities
M245	Relo Kick V1.4	Latest D Grader for A1200
M259	Easy Spell	Spell checker/helper
M262	Essential Virus Killers	Kills all the latest viruses
M299	Tee to Green	Excellent golf-scorer
M310	Personality Analysis	Type in answers to assess yourself
M311	Cop the Lot Pro	Updated lottery helper
M332	Virus Checker V6.5	New updated killer
M333	Disk Repair Kit	Salvages damaged disks
M391	Car Data Analyst	Check your car parts!!

DEMOS + RAVE

D075	Girls of sport	Pretty shots of talented girls
D106	Madonna	Pictures and music
D166	Star Trek Animations	Anims. of USS Enterprise
D177	Star Trek Animations	Agatron no.17 More like above. Good
D287	Calendar Girls	Slideshow
D312	Rave Vision	Rave music & Graphics
D313	Techno Warrior	Rave dukebox
D314	Nine Fingers (2 disks)	Good. Sequel to State of Art

MUSIC

M069	Rock a round the Xmas Tree	(2 disks) (N)
M084	Pink Floyd	The Wall remix
M093	MC Hammer	Can't touch this
M094	Guns 'n' Roses	Pictures & Music
U244	Sound Tracker Samples (4 Disks)	100's of sounds for sampling

ADVENTURE GAMES

Ad005	All New Star Trek (2 drives, 2 disks)	USS Enterprise classic. Best one
Ad007	American Star Trek (2 drives, 2 disks) (N)	Graphic adventure
Ad019	Dungeon Delver (2 disks)	Difficult adventure quest
Ad065	Pixie Kingdom (2 disks)	Tricky adventure game. Good
Ad222	Neighbours Adventure	(2 discs) Bring Paul Robinson to court
Ad245	Iron Clads (2 disks)	Graphic adventure
Ad326	Wibble World Giddy	Really good platform game
Ad421	Glassback II	Very good platform game
Ad500	The Devils Abode	3D Horror Adventure
Ad511	The Krillian Incident (not 1.3)	Elite style game

ARCADE + PLATFORM

A010	Breakout	Classic bat & ball game
A011	Blizzard	Horizontal shoot-'em-up. High quality
A024	Eat Mine (N)	Emerald Mine Balderdash game
A165	Super Skoda	Car racing game
A181	Quick 'n Silver (N)	Platform. Similar to New Zealand Story
A207	Flagcatcher	Find the flags. Very addictive
A209	Games Galore Ten (N)	14 excellent games
A214	Parachute Joust	Fight for parachute on descent. V. good
A221	Revenge of Mutant Camels	Good. Similar to Centipede
A226	Dual	2 player action shoot-em-up
A243	Tetren	Excellent Tetris clone
A247	Quiz Master	Quiz which includes Editor
A255	Amos Games	5 Games including Glassback
A327	Tetris Pro	Tetris game with exceptional variants
A333	Icerunner (N)	Recom. Brilliant platform game. 10 out of 10
A338	Project Buzz Bar	Excellent asteroid type game
A340	Depth Charge	Submarine game
A341	Earth Invader	The best space invader game
A433	Harry Haddock	Really good platform adventure
A434	Amiga Boy	Console games on Amiga!
A443	Nimble!	New. Addictive graphical platformer
A502	Cyberman	3D Pacman game. Excellent
A503	Chaneques (2 disks)	Like Lemmings. Good
A504	Rebellion	Asteroids shoot-em-up
A512	Transplant	Good fun asteroids game
A515	ASI 240	Caterpaults, Super Daleks, Muhtar
A516	ASI 241	China Tiles, Minhunters, Think Ahead
A518	ASI 243	Tank, Colour and Mind and High Pressure
A519	ASI 244	Masterblaster, Stench and Pacwar

STRATEGY + WAR GAMES

Sim102	Simulation 1 (1 meg)	Recommended. 5 games including Metro
Sim109	Wheel of Fortune	TV Quiz, computerized
Sim124	Napoleonic Warfare	High-quality simulation
Sim143	Card Shop	Well presented card games
Sim217	Act of War	Excellent strategy game
Sim218	Roulette	Casino Classic
Sim220	Sub Attack (N)	Also landmine + bomber
Sim224	Stratigic Games	3 excellent games
Sim410	Island	Excellent board-game. Build hotels & money
Sim414	Diplomacy (N)	Classic, similar to Risk
Sim415	War (N)	Top-quality 8-bit strategy
Sim158	Total War (N)	Risk type game
Sim428	The Shepherd	Populous clone
Sim431	Rags to Riches	Become a millionaire
Sim444	Ultimated Quiz	Pub-quiz clone
Sim505	Scrabble	Board-game computerised

SPORT

Sp170	Amos Criket	'Owzat!
Sp208	Grand Prix Simulator	Excellent
Sp256	Slamball	Management game of US football.Type Sport
Sp263	Soccer Cards	Simplistic league-based game
Sp299	Top Of The League	Addictive football management game
Sp303	Strikeball	Baseball-type action game
Sp307	18th Hole (2 disks)	Excellent golfing game
Sp325	Mister Men Olympics (2 disks)	Excellent game for disks as reviewed in Amiga Computing
Sp337	Super League Manager 2	Updated soccer management game
Sp372	Road To Hell	Well-produced racing game
Sp373	Wrestling (2 disks, WB2.0 upwards)	Good fun graphics
Sp376	Unsensible Soccer	Good football game
Sp429	A Day at the Races	Simple horse racing game

A1200/A4000 ONLY

U235	Sleepless Nights	Compilation of A1200 utilities
U246	Magic W/Bench	Excellent W/B improvement for A1200
U321	Chesmayne	Chess text & pictures
U324	Lottery Winner AGA	Helps you to win!
U508	Videotracker 2	AGA demo-creator
D285	Fairlight	29 meg of graphics on one disk
D289	State Of Art	Famous quality demo
D290	Raving Mad Me	High quality music video
D291	Lethal Exit	Stunning demo
D300	Technotrack II	More rave music
D301	Retina	Excellent Vector film demo
D305	Tina Small	Slideshow of model
D315	Minomist Rave	Great dance demo
D509	Phoebe Cates	High-resolution slideshow
E300	Speak & Spell	Good for Learning Youngsters
G321	AGA Klondike (3 disks)	Excellent patience card game
G322	Giger Tetris	Tetris clone
G339	AGA Megaball	Brilliant breakout game
G372	Mad Fighter	2 player Street Fighter game
G414	Motorola Invaders (2 disks)	Brilliant space invaders
G420	Pssst AGA	Arcade AGA game
G440	Missile Over Zenon (2 disks)	3D missile command
G441	To the Death	Street fighter clone
G442	Excellent card games III	Restricted AGA version
G445	AGA Donkey Kong	Re-hash of original. Good
G506	Battle Duel	Multiplayer artillery game
G507	Samurai Showdown	Street-fighter clone
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Power management

Directory Opus 5 was so different it was hardly recognisable as a file manager, but the big changes didn't suit everyone. Now Gareth Lofthouse reports on Info Nexus 2, a program with more of a traditional appeal

Everyone knows that file managers and databases are indispensible components in the Amiga's software set-up, but they're not the sort of things to stir the blood. Most of us would rather spend serious money on creative packages, so it's not surprising if we refuse to pay the asking prices for some of the Amiga's more mundane commercial utilities.

Fortunately, we may now have access to a decent file manager *and* a database at the surprisingly low price of £30. Optonica's Info Nexus 2/Data Nexus package is undoubtedly cheap, but the question remains: does it have the power to do the job? To start with Info Nexus, a major challenge for the designers has been to persuade Amiga owners to abandon the long-time acknowledged leading file manager, Directory Opus. Version 5 of that powerful program, with its multiple windows and quirky innovations, was not to everybody's liking, however, and Optonica seem set to capitalise on this.

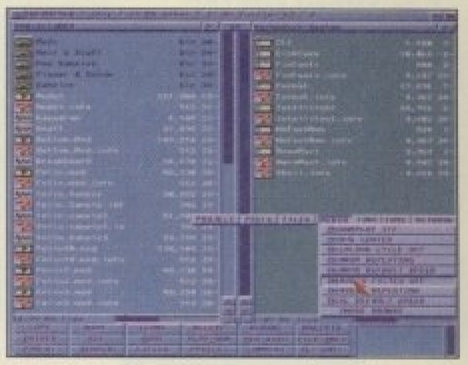
In contrast to Opus, Nexus 2 has the same dull-looking interface as its predecessor and is divided into the traditional left/right windows we've come to expect from the standard file manager. It looks more basic, and indeed is more basic, than its rival – but to be honest it's also a great deal easier to use, a fact that will no doubt prove to be a key selling point.

It's also only fair to say it has all the essential facilities you'd expect, plus some powerful new additions that make it attractive regardless of the bargain price. It seems, for example, to have faster directory access times than its rivals, and it will play soundfiles, display pictures and launch programs with a double-click of the mouse.

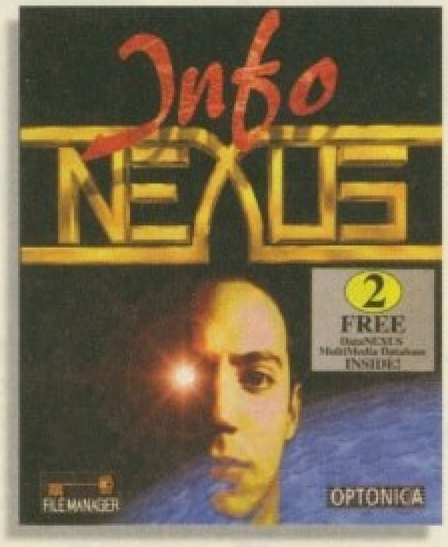
New for this version is the Image Browser function, a facility that will search out all the picture files in any given directory and automatically display them as thumbnail sized previews. Users can then click on any of the thumbnails to get a full size viewing, and they can select files they want which will remain highlighted for mistake-free batch processing. The interface incorporates 'pop and roll' menus that will come up anywhere in the screen on pressing the right mouse button – a feature that works reasonably well once you're used to it. Another new addition, however, is a feature called Dynamic Typing.

This new option displays each file with an icon, giving users an instant idea of what their contents are. Thus, picture files are indicated by an artists palette, info files with a question mark, and sound files with a waveform, making searching and sorting more of an instinctive exercise.

Like Opus, users can configure Nexus so that it will perform preset actions when a particular file type is double-clicked on, a feature that makes using the program seem easier and more natural. Add to that powerful networking support in the form of Envoy, and a point-and-click help function, and Info Nexus begins to look like a decent little performer.



A dull interface, but many of us will welcome its simplicity and speed



Freebase

Despite the fact it's been thrown into the pack for free, the file manager's database companion, Data Nexus, is another surprisingly powerful program. Using the same kind of bland but usable interface, it can handle all the usual types of fields includi gnumber, time, text and data. More advanced calculations can be performed allowing, for example, serial numbers to be automatically generated for club memberships or summary fields for totals.Data can be imported and exported and there's the same type of networking support as found in the file manager. Searching power isn't bad either, thanks to a tool that allows users to add things like search criteria with a click of the mouse.

Final count

The price on this package is remarkably low considering the features each of the programs offers. Ironically, this could prejudice people against the quality of the software, despite the fact it's really quite impressive. True, Info Nexus is hardly good looking and it lacks the power or configurability of Directory Opus. Similarly Data Nexus can't quite match up to databases like Twist 2.

If you're looking for a reasonable amount of worthwhile features in packages that will do the job perfectly adequately, you'll be hard pushed to beat this winning team from Optonica.

SYSTEM ESSENTIALS

RED = Essential **BLACK** = Recommended

1 Mb RAM

O.S 1.3+

The bottom line

Product: Info Nexus
Price: £29.99
Supplier: Optonica
Tel: 01455 558282

Ease of use	**9**
Implementation	**7**
Value for money	**9**
Overall	**8.5**

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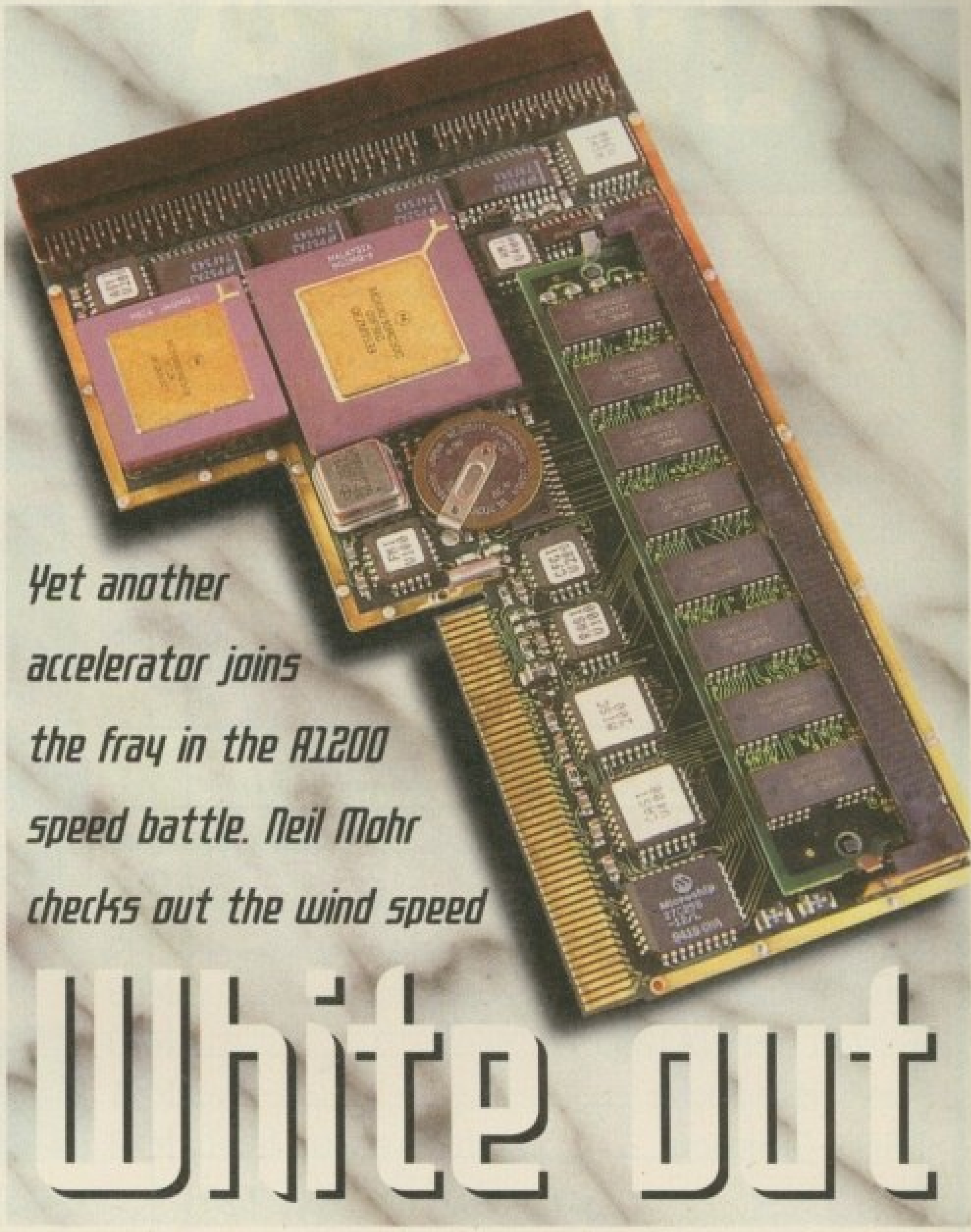
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White out

Yet another accelerator joins the fray in the A1200 speed battle. Neil Mohr checks out the wind speed



The never-ending quest for speed. Whatever computer you have, no matter how fast it is, you are always gong to end up drumming your fingers on the desk staring at a slowly growing percentage bar, or tiresomely spinning watch pointer. What is the answer? Buy an accelerator.

Now, no-one is saying an accelerator is going to banish all that waiting about, even Captain Picard has to wait a short while for the Enterprise computer to reply, but it sure does help.

This latest incarnation of the Blizzard sports a full 50Mhz 030 including the MMU – no messing around there. If you do your sums, this will make your tired old A1200 up to seven times as fast – just under half the speed of an A4000. Having the MMU is also a bit of a boon as it allows you to use virtual memory, or Enforcer if you are a programmer.

When you first see the Blizzard it looks like someone has cut a big chunk out of the side, due to an edge connector which is used to fit a SCSI 2 interface. I have not had the chance to test this yet, but would assume the end result would be a new SCSI connector out of the back of your computer similar to the DataFlyer and Falcon. This extra space does make the Blizzard easy to fit because you have plenty of finger room to angle it into place.

The Blizzard does have a number of extras built into the board that are a little unusual. The first is a MAPROM function. If you have extra memory installed, by placing a jumper on the board the Amiga's Kickstart ROM will be automatically copied into this extra FastRAM. This allows allof Kickstart's operations to be executed from RAM which is usually faster than when run out of ROM. This should speed up OS operations such as Window redraws and gadget operations. I can never tell the difference between the two, and it also means you lose 1/2Mb, so I have never bothered with such functions.

When it comes to actually choosing what type of expansion memory you want, you really should get at least 2Mb when you purchase any accelerator. Otherwise, any speed advantage is all but lost due to programs being run out of the much slower chip RAM.

Firstly, any size of SIMM is catered for, from 1Mb all the way up to 128Mb – when they become available and if you could actually afford one! Nothing unusual there, but the Blizzard also supports the use of PC 36-bit SIMMs. Now, normal computers only need 32-bit SIMMs – these are the ones normally used on Amiga accelerators – but the PC needs extra bits for parity checking its memory. Hence the extra 4-bits.

The advantage of 36-bit SIMMs is that they are normally a little cheaper due to the higher demand for them, so you might want to use one of these instead of the usual 32-bit SIMMs. Now don't go thinking you will end up with any extra memory as the Blizzard just ignores these extra bits.

One final memory-related feature the Blizzard has depends on the speed of memory SIMM you are using. The minimum SIMM speed the Blizzard can take is 70ns, due to the high clock rate of the processor. If, however, you get hold of a 60ns SIMM you will be able to get up to a further 10 per cent speed increase by fitting a jumper on the board.

Finally if, for whatever reason, you need to disable the accelerator, I think compatibility with some tiresome programs would be top of the list. You can get the computer to ignore the entire expansion boards, including the processor, memory and SCSI interface by simply holding down the 2 key when you boot your computer – this is potentially very useful.

The Blizzard is a good 030 accelerator, and with the recent price drop is very competitively priced. You should remember, however, that though the plain board may seem initially cheap, if you end up buying a 4Mb SIMM, Co-processor and SCSI-2 module, this adds a fairly hefty £300 plus to the initial price of the board.

Speedophiles

For all you speed junkies out there, this Blizzard might not be fast enough for you. As 50Mhz is as fast as 030s go, there is currently only one other option available in the form of Power's Falcon 040/060, which comes with the SCSI 3 interface as standard.

It is also worth considering that if you do add a Co-processor and the SCSI 2 option, the total price is only £70 short of the base Falcon, which is twice as fast.

There is an 060 Blizzard on the horizon but, as yet, there is no sign of it, and the SCSI 2 module is still extra.

SYSTEM ESSENTIALS

RED = Essential **BLACK** = Recommended

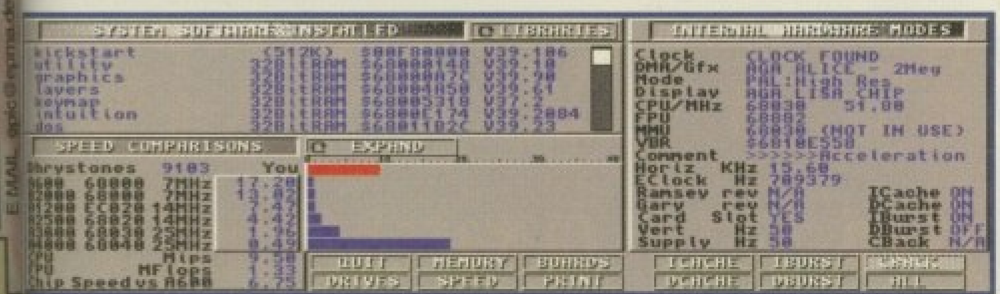


4/8/16Mb SIMM

The bottom line

Product: Blizzard 1230-IV
Supplier: Gordon Harwood
Price: Board: £179.95
Co-Pro: £79.95
SCSI-2: £89.95
Phone: 01773 836781

Ease of use	**9**
Implementation	**8**
Value for money	**7**
Overall	**8**



SysInfo gives us the lowdown on just how fast the Blizzard is

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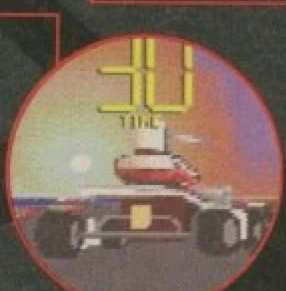
Flight of the Amazon Queen

Yes, it is finally here, and we're not lying either. Is Time Warner Interactive's adventure the game of the year? Possibly



Alien Breed 3D

After Gloom, Fears, Citadel et al. Can this beat all the other doom-style games out so far?



Virtual Karting

Fabio Bizetti's Virtual Karting has the opportunity of crossing the line in first position

Previews



Street Racer

A work in progress look at how the Amiga version is shaping up

Features



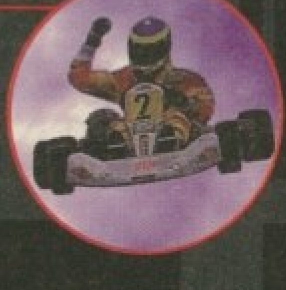
Christmas Hits

We point out the Christmas hits and misses that have been spawned during the past year



Intersect Developments

The two-man team behind Intersect Developments talk to System about their latest shoot-'em-up, Atrophy



Fabio Bizetti

The programmer of Virtual Karting talks to System about the Amiga industry and its future

Competition

Win the excellent new Chaos Pack courtesy of one of the biggest Amiga distibutors in the country, Silica



By Andy Maddock

Dungeon doom

Before you even think it, this game is not Doom of any description. It's merely a Dungeon Master clone by Black Legend called Evil's Doom. Basically, it will be Dungeon Master with better graphics and more depth. It'll run at Hi-Res- allowing spectacular ray-traced enemies, objects, screens and animations. Also, there'll be many different scenarios to battle through accompanied by an atmospheric novel. Evil's Doom is due out quite soon and could offer something new to the market - alongside all the tiresome Doom clones.

Lost in the Amiga debacle

Limbo of the Lost is finally making its debut on the Amiga, and it's absolutely packed to the rafters too! It will either come on a standard CD for the CD32 or 15-20 floppy disks depending on your own set-up. Thankfully, the disks are hard disk installable.

The CD will boast real-time speech and atmospheric effects along with special cinematic sequences enhancing the original game graphics.

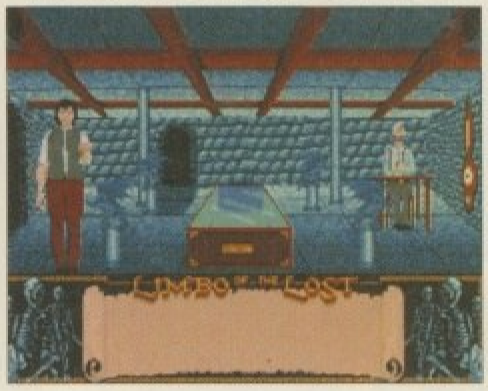
Limbo of the Lost is a point and click adventure in which you'll meet a series of people and places. It's all to do with the famous mystery ship, the Mary Celeste. Obviously the game is half fiction, although all the dates, names and map co-ordinates are completely true.



This is the second level from Limbo of the Lost, and although you can't hear them, Tri-Logik have added some excellent sound effects

From what I have seen of the Welcome levels, the animation and the sound effects in particular are looking and sounding superb. There is a range of sampled dialogue which accompanies the game and it adds that little bit extra in terms of playability.

Unfortunately, Tri-Logik Studios, the developers, are still looking for a publisher after Rasputin's unexpected departure from the Amiga world. However, when the actual quality of Limbo of the Lost is revealed, I can't see Tri-Logik having any problems finding a publisher.



The presentation in Limbo is superb, it should set you on the road for a journey of a lifetime

Virtually gone already!

No sooner had Virtual Karting made an appearance on the Amiga, than author Fabio Bizzetti and fellow publishers OTM are already penning in some details for their future release – Starfighter.

It's an epic shoot-'em-up which will take advantage of the A1200's chipset by using a true 3D perspective, not to mention asteroids, space stations and planets. There are two game modes to follow. The arcade option allows you to play single mission and travel freely around the game, and the other is an adventure whereby the action takes place as if in a storyboard – following a plot.

It will recognise a joypad, digital and analogue joysticks, and also any accelerator boards or FastRAM. This will be another game published by OTM, which exploits the Amiga's hardware to the maximum. Finally, although it will come on five disks, they will all be installable, keeping the disk access down to a bare minimum.

Starfighter is set for release at the start of January '96, with a CD32 version to follow. The developer, Fabio Bizetti, has turned down offers to program for the PC and the Playstation because he believes the Amiga is the best machine – with commitment like that, Starfighter can't possibly go wrong.

Sign on, here

OTM have signed two new development teams, who are currently working on two brand new games.

Weathermine Software are the first team and their game is called XP8. It's a vertical scrolling 2D shoot-'em-up with 256 colours and runs at 50 frames per second – taking advantage of all the Amiga's internal and external hardware.

The other product is called QP-Tennis and is currently being worked on by an Italian development team. Not only does it contain an arcade mode for up to four players, but also a full career option for up to 32! All the major competitions are involved, namely the ATP tour and Davis Cup. There's also a Crazy Tournament where you can play against seven of the world's best players and execute some impossible shots, and also play on some ludicrous surfaces.

QP-Tennis will include 300 frames of animation for each player, 128 colours for each television-style view, different referees, linesmen, ball-boys, speech, and the players will even argue with the decisions. If it plays as good as it sounds, tennis fans will be in for a real treat next Spring.

XP8 will be released early next year, with QP-Tennis following suit later. We'll keep you informed of their progress.

P-P-P-Pick one up

Penguins was planned to be released by Alternative Software, although, the programmer, Scott Hayne has decided to go solo and publish it himself. Apparently, he'd rather keep the copyright for the game so he can add bits to it and release data disks as he wishes.

The idea behind the game is fairly Lemmings-esque. You must guide two small Penguins to the exit which is located somewhere on the level – as well as collecting some eggs against the clock.

You take control of a Wolf who can drop bombs, flick switches and open doors. Although



You control the Wolf, and the idea is to guide those Penguins to somewhere safe



Platform games have completely disappeared during the last few months, hopefully we'll see a resurrection – beginning with Penguins

it may sound like it's a simple game that just requires an ounce of logic, the Penguins both have special attributes that can only be used in certain situations. Therefore, the Penguins are assigned tasks to complete, and with 60 levels, you can bet there are some in there that look damn near impossible.

The first Penguin can collect all the keys for the opening of doors, while the second is used to dispose of beasties. Therefore, forward planning and an extreme sense of problem solving is required.

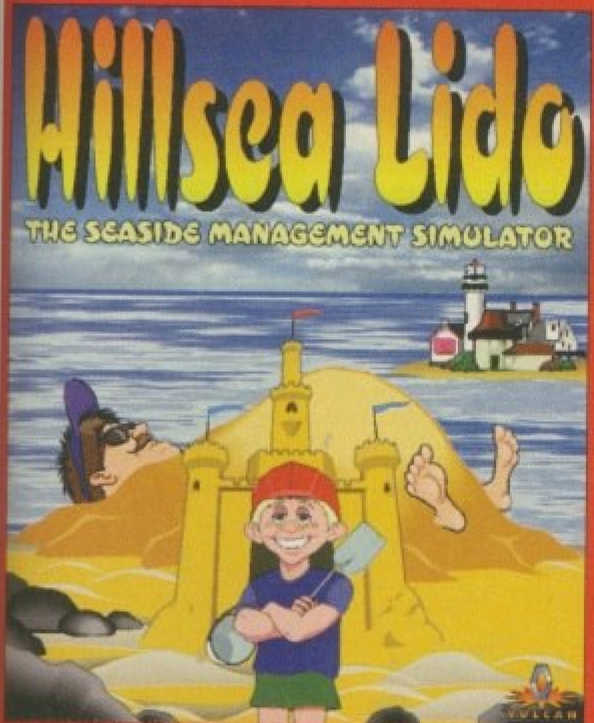
We'll be able to see how Penguins is shaping up when we give it a full review next month.

Extra time

Player Manager 2 has already become one of the successful games since its release. It's rated very highly in the charts and adding to their success, Anco are releasing the first in a long line of data disks.

Player Manager 2 Extra – Chase for Glory is basically an enhanced version for the A1200. There are now real players and teams, not to mention new graphics, sound effects and many more thrilling features. It should be coming your way very soon, look out for it.

Big coconuts



Since the success of Timekeepers, Portsmouth-based Vulcan Software have been working on their new Theme Park-like release, Hillsea Lido. Have you ever been to the seaside – seen all the attractions? Have you ever wondered who actually is in charge of it all? Well, I don't know, but I do know that Vulcan Software are releasing a first in gaming entertainment – a seaside management simulator. After the success of Sim City and Theme Park, the world was crying out for a new 'sim' game, and now your prayers have been answered.

Yes, you have to take control of what you put on your pier, whether it's stalls, shops, attractions, parks or even shows. You play a vital part in being the seaside's manager, responsible for booking gigs at the local theatre to attract the crowds, and generally making the money and pleasing the visitors. What could be simpler than organising a few Donkey rides?

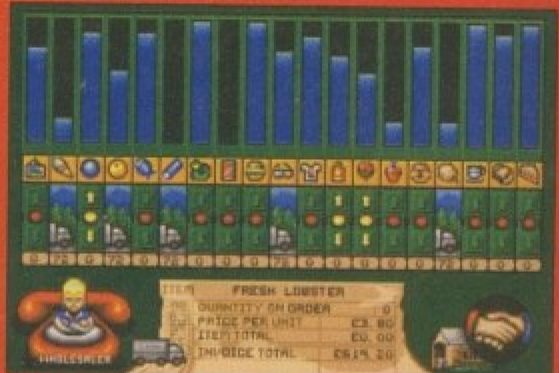
The characters themselves are programmed to be as intelligent as possible so they will act accordingly to what you do and how you do it. Consequently, you certainly won't get away with cheap, sugary ice-cream and warm soft drinks for £1.50 a throw – like in real life.

The graphics are looking excellent, especially with a vast array of sprites and animations of the British public trying to get to grips with the attractions.

We'll see how many coconuts Hillsea Lido will manage to knock off the stand when we give it a full review next month.



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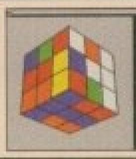
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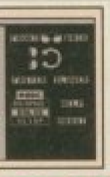
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U846 C64 emulator V3 (2DISK) C64 emulator/latest
U848 SPECTRUM EMULATOR V2- Spectrum emulator
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U883 OPTI-Utils 1-over 30 disk copier/Optimise ect
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U976 MAGIC SLECTOR V1.4-Change Magic WB ...
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U996 BOOKIE BEATER- gambling programe ...
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U999 HD MEMORY (new collection) require MMU
U1000 MAGIC OPUS VOL 2 & 3 (2D) more Dopus ...
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U1002 TURBO CAT (WB 2&3 only) catalogue ...
U1003 LOTTORY WINNER V2-new version
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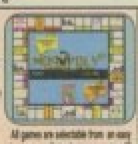
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G222 MEGA 21 GAMES amazing 21 games
G235 DRAGON-CAVE brillant 3D puzzle games
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G325 BATTLEMENT hunch back of notcha
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G331 GRAVITY massive space exploring game
G333 CYBER-NETIC Brillant 8 way blaster
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G335 CRAZY SUE II- best platform to date
G342 SUPER SKODA CHALLENGE (& track editors)
G344 STAR-TREK similar to RAID2 but harder
G355 DOODY very cute & extremely addict
G356 WONDER LAND amazing graphic recommed
G362 DELUXE PACMAN + best pacman ever release
G367 CARD GAMES collection
G368 WIZARD-DOMAINS-dugeon type games
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G445 DESCENDER GAME tank, search & desender
G446 OBLIDOX excellent Arcade/Puzzle game
G448 PARACHUTE JOUST quite playable
G455 CASTLE OF DOOM VG graphic adventure.
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G467 CASH FRUIT- good fruit machines
G478 AMOS CRICKET cricket games
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G489 ENGIMA MACHINE very challenging puzzle
G490 MEGA BALL 2 very playable break out clone
G491 BOUNCE & BLAST brillant platform 10/10
G492 ZOMBIES & DEFENDER 2 fantastic games
G494 MERCANERY SIMULATION 3D wars games
G499 LIFE -simulation very interesting
G500 TRANSPLANT dozen of level fast arcade.
G501 KLAWZ THE KAT-great platform games
G511 HIGHWAY HELL like SPY HUNTER on the C64
G531 OPERATION FIRESTORMS-brillant
G534 CASTLE KUMQUAT similar to Alien breed
G535 BLACK DAWN brillant graphic adventure
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G552 ELEVATION games base on lift ??
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G567 STARBASE 13 (2D) Bril like MONKEY ISLAND
G657 AMOS LOADSA MONEY best FRUIT-MACHINES
G659 MR MEN OLYMPIC (2D) many event to complete
G660 4 L.C.D DREAM 4 small hand held games
G664 NEIGHBOUR GAMES (2D) base on the TV series
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G674 HIGH OCTANE Fast car racing (notwb1.3)
G675 TIME RUNNER amazing graphic adventure
G680 SPACE-INVASION 2 - Fantastic Galaxain
G681 AUTOMOBILES - PD version of SKID MARK bril
G682 BANDIT MANIA - Brillant fruit machine demo
G685 PROJECT BUZZ BAR -Brillant asteroid
G689 GUN FIGHT (not A500(1.3)
G690 THE REAL POPEYE 64 (a500 1.3 only)
G692 SYSTEM DEFEND-Brillant Defender clone
G698 AMIGA-BOY-Game boy emulator + tetriz
G732 DETHELL IN SPACE. Recommed.
G735 OVERLANDER Brillant arcade MOON ALERT
G737 SERIOUS BACKGAMMON The best in PD BG
G771 STAR WOID (2 Disk) brillant Thrust
G772 UN-SENSIBLE SOCCER very similer to Sensible scoccer games. RECOMMEND

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G774 TRICKLE TREAT -like DOOM on the PC
G775 FOOT-BALL MANAGER-new version
G782 SOLO ASSAULT 3D like Wing Commander
G783 SEED OF DARKNESS-Brillant graphic adven.
G784 NANO FLY Superb explore game RECOMMEND
G785 THE GREAT GOLD RAID- very addicted
G787 ANT WAR V1.9 (LATEST) not 1.3
G788 ZENO-MORPH -Great grahic
G789 TASK FORCE very good MIND SHADOW clone
G790 GREEN FIVE Amazing 3D graphic like
G791 PROFFESIONAL BINGO CALLER
G792 MARTIAL SPRIT like Street fighter II
G798 6 EXCELLENT CARD GAMES collection
G809 BLITZ 2 fast action shooting games
G810 EXIT 13 Brillant puzzle
G811 TEMPORAL MISPLACEMENT-graphic adventure
G812 ADAY AT THE RACE-V.Goodhorse racing games
G820 BOULDER ORIGINAL with 80 level
G821 BOULDERDASH cave/level Construction kit
G822 BOULDER COLLECTION 2/3 160 level (2disk)
G839 BOULDER PACK with 640 level on 8 disk
G860 ALIEN NET WORK-new Spacing Invader
G862 BATTLE FORCE excellent text adventure.
G863 GNU CHESS the best chess with 10 level
G868 SWORD OF YIGG Graphic adventure
G867 POWER-TETRIZ for 1 or 2 player
G868 SUPER SMASHING TETRIZ
G870 CHESS II & CHECKER One of the best around must for all CHESS or CHECKER player
G871 GRAVITY FORCE 2 1 or 2 player thrust clone
G872 SCHNEBITZ Commercial quality puzzle games
G875 DELEXE GALA v2.3(new) add new feature & bouns gamme + 2 player RECOMMEND, get it now
G876 THE KRILLIAN INCENDENT like ELITE2/Epic
G878 QUANTUM-Maze colect & escape type games
G879 RAG TO RICHES - like MONOPLY

NEW 101 GAMES PK 3

New 101 pack 3 contains over 100 games, runs on all Amigas, only £11.99 offer buy any 2 packs together & receive a free £4 token for use with next order. This offer cannot be used with any other offer current & subject to condition apply.

G884 WIPE OUT-mindless blasting games
G885 GODZILLA Another shootem up
G886 SUPER MEGA FRUIT- All new Fruit Machine
G888 DRIVING MANIAC 3D (fill vector like Indi500) car racing- very fast. RECOMMEND
G889 PLANET FALL - Luner Lander clone
G891 BUCK TOOTH ADVENTURE Very good multi level shoot/collect em up RECOMMEND
G892 PENGO 2- Maze type games. Recommend
G893 SUPER OBLITERATION Blast asteroid very similar to PANG 2 lot of weapon RECOMMEND
G894 SUPER INVASION II -New SPACING INVADER
G897 THE SHEPERD Brillant POPULUS clone. REC
G898 ALIEN GENOCIDE (2) Shoot aliens set in space.
G899 PUCKMAN. One of the better PacMan arround.
G900 SUPER-BATTLE ZONE.3D (not WB1.3)
G901 M*A*S*H a (ANTWAR 2) play very similar to LEMMING & WORM, with load of Weapon (Brillant)
G904 LAST SOLDIER (2) multilevel platform games
G905 CBBERTECH (2) exclient ALIEN BREED Clone
G906 HANGMAN any one for a game?
G907 ACE SPACE nice Platform games
G908 COLOURMANIA slide/Klatriz type puzzle games
G910 HARRY-HADDOCK- Brillant platformer games
G912 MANGLE FENDER -Brillant, Smash up other car/tank ect to win, extremly addicted. get it
G913 ARCADE GAMES CLASSIC Vol 1 & 2 (2d)
G914 HELICOPTER-play like Desert strike
G915 COW WARS. Very addicted 2 player games
G916 ISLAND -Play like Monoply.
G919 COP THE LOT Pro Latest Lottery preditor
G920 LOTTERY PROFFESIONAL This version use
G921 MONOPLY. (board games) The best version
G922 JET WILLY 3 - excellent platform games
G923 FLAMMING ENGINE-Superb car racing
G924 POWER MACHINES. Grahicaly brillant shoot
G925 SUCIDE-MACHINE Operation wolf style
G926 ZAXXON 3D Superb C64 3D blaster games
G927 BOING V3. Great platformer, recommend
G928 PUNTER-Animate horse racing games
G929 ARCADE JIGSAW (2d) include LION KING
G930 WHEEL CHAIR GLADITOR-Very fun to play
G931 NIMBLE-Brillant New arcade puzzle.
G933 BLACK DAWN 3- THE NEW BEGINNING (2) Superb 3D adventure. RECOMMEND
G934 R3 ROCKET (NEW)very good rockets games
G935 BATTLE SHIP- the finest PD version
G936 LAST LAP - Fast car racing

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E020 WORLD DATABASE require (2+meg)
E021 STORY LAND II interact puzzle games rec
E022 LANGUAGE TUTOR teach you 5 language
E023 TALKING COLOURING BOOK talking Dpaint bril
E024 EASY SPELL II improve your kid spelling
E025 SCRABBLE require 2-4player. brillant
E026 WORDS can help you solve the crossword
E027 OSWALD Very colourful large cartoon game
E030 EVOLUTION breed your own hybrid
E031 IQ TEST + IQ GAMES pack 1 excellent
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E041 KID ALPHABET display all alphabet letter
E042 FRACTION & SILOUEST maths & games excellent
E043 MATH MASTER teach/test you more on maths
E044 STEAM ENGINE V7 graphic & tutorial
E045 PETROL ENGINE tutorial & animate graphic
E046 GAS TURBINE ENGINE tutoria & anim graphic
E047 STIRLING ENGINE tutorial & anim graphic
E050 DREAM FOR ANGEL explain the meaning of dream
E051 INVISIBLE WORLD brillant recommend
E052 FISH TANK turn your amiga into a FISHTANK
E054 DEMOLITION MISSION simple game for kid
E055 WORD POWER solve crossword puzzle ect good.
E056 WORM HOLE simple game ideal for children.
E057 APPLE CATCHER catch falling apple brilliant
E058 CROSS MAZE & CRYPTOKING 2 excellent kid games
E059 VERB QUIZ find the word & it related. Bril
E061 KING JAMES BIBLE (4d) complete bibles excel
E066 TARROT clairvoyant in a instance
E068 GALLOW fancy a games of hang man?
E070 MATH DRILLS teach all basic math skill Vgood
E071 ERROR INFO give info why your amiga crash
E075 WORLD-WAR 2 graphics tutorial on WORLD-WAR releate program eg simulate Starprobe/ molecube/ ect
E076 SCIENCE an excellent collection of science ideal for all who interesting or studies in science recommend, this pack come on 4 disks
E080 KIDPRIX great children paint programme.
E081 ASTROMY PACK- This is a mazing collection of programe relate to astromy. can help to locate certain or star position ect. must for anyone who studies astromy or hobby. great (4DISK)
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E074 AMIGA BEGINER GUIDE tutorial on Amigas
E085 NODDY PLAYTIME demo >Very good
E080 KID PIX more excellent paint programes
E081 D.T.P FOR KID easy to use, excellent
E092 SING A RYHMES sing a song
E094 HIGH WAY CODE TUTOR question on highway code
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E097 BACK TO SKOOL vol 1 collection of the best
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E163 JAPANESE - teach you the japanese language
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E184 IMAGINES VIDEO 2disk
E185 WORKBENCH 2/3 GUIDE On line help/Complete
E210 LEARN & PLAY 3 Latest Education & Games
E240 BARNEY THE BEAR GOES CAMPING (2d) Brillant teach your child about animal
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E242 GUIDE TO WEATHER (3d) superb complete guide to the weather. recommend
E245 MATH ATTACK- Maths relate games for kids
E242 ANIMAL-LAND-Ideal for young kid. Excel
E243 PICTURE-MATHS-Maths program for kids
E246 BEGINER GUIDE TO WB 3 (A1200 only)
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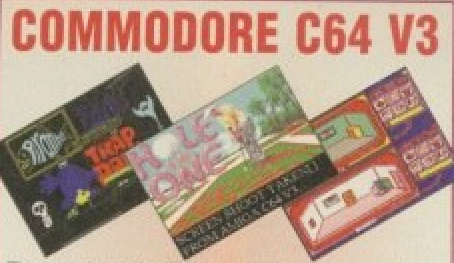
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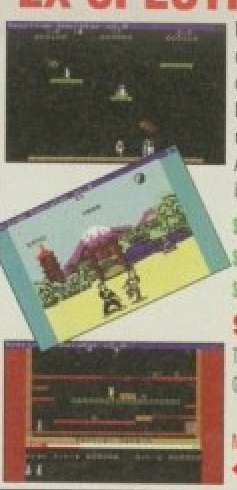


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AGA011 SLEEPLESS NIGHT 3
AGA012 PLANET GROOVE Truly A1200 Demos
AGA013 MOTOR INVADER 2 (2D) Brillant INVADER game
AGA015 POINT OF SCALE Great A1200 only demos
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AGA017 WORLD OF MANGA (4DISK) magnificent Japanese comic slide show include Japanes Chick etc recommend
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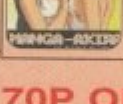
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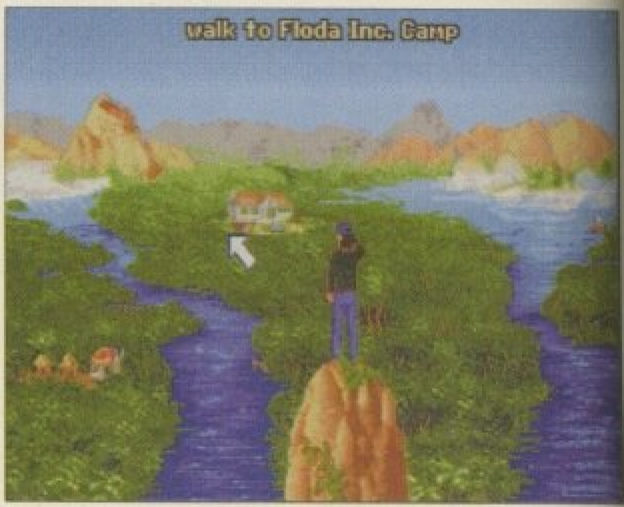
GAMEPLAY 87%

OVERALL 93%

PUBLISHER	Warner Interactive
DEVELOPER	Binary Illusions
PRICE	£29.99
DISKS	11
HD INSTALL	Yes
SUPPORTS	A1200



The cartoon style of the graphics works well with the tone of the game



The 'Pinnacle' offers an unusual way of moving between the different locations

We first reported on this game way back in December 1994, many months ago. It looked great, and we all looked forward to it coming in. We waited and waited. And we waited. Finally though, we have the final version and it was worth the wait. In fact, it's a miracle you're actually getting this review this month because I've only just been dragged away from the game out of fear of the wrath of our sub-editor getting irate for not having any copy in this month. This does actually benefit you because we're nearly at the end of the game and if all goes to plan you should be getting the cheat mode very soon – well, that's our excuse.

So as you've probably gleaned already, this is a highly addictive game that's likely to keep you glued to the monitor until you finish it. It's an adventure game that follows the exploits of Joe King. He's a pilot with a mission to take the glamorous film star, Faye Russell, off to an exotic location for a film shoot.

Disaster strikes even before take off and Faye is whisked away by one of Joe's rivals. Joe eventually rescues her and they continue their jinxed journey. A storm brews, lightening strikes, and the crew end up stranded in the Amazonian jungle. They then stumble across an evil plot involving a kidnapped princess, a mad scientist, and ladenhosen. Well, it gets more involved than this but I won't spoil it for you because the game has a great way of revealing the plot as you go along.

There are many more good points and what is particularly successful is how well the puzzles run together. This is probably why I've not left my computer for so long because unlike some adventures, you're never left stuck in one place – you can go around, collect other clues and then come back, which all works exceptionally well. Another aspect which makes you keep on playing is the fact you don't die for stupid reasons. For instance, if you're in a situation where a fight breaks out, some games leave you for dead and onto the restart level. Here though, each part just leads on to the next and if you get a kicking then it's only to form the next clue.

Comparison

Cruise for a Corpse

Delphine's point 'n' click adventure is another title among the top contenders. Reminiscent of an Agatha Christie-style plot, you played the character of Inspector Dussentier, trying to find the murderer on a cruise ship. Some of the clues however, were a little strange and FOAQ works far better with more logical puzzles.

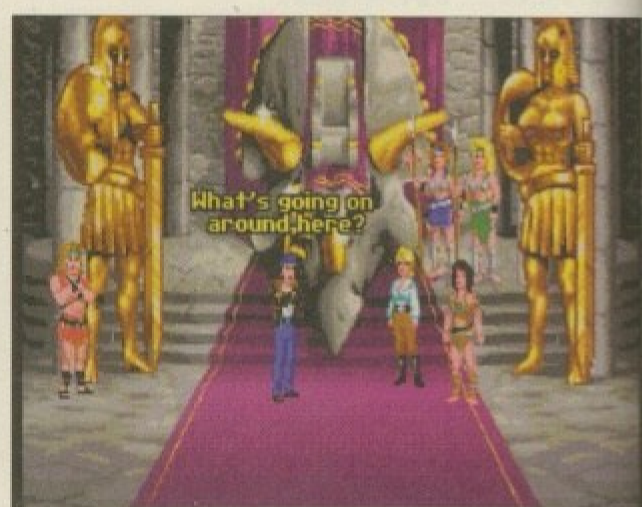
The Secret of Monkey Island

As mentioned countless times before, Monkey Island surpasses all other games in this genre. Due to the style of humour and the excellent puzzles, it became a classic. FOAQ is nearly there – it certainly plays as well. However, it just doesn't have quite that many gags as MI.

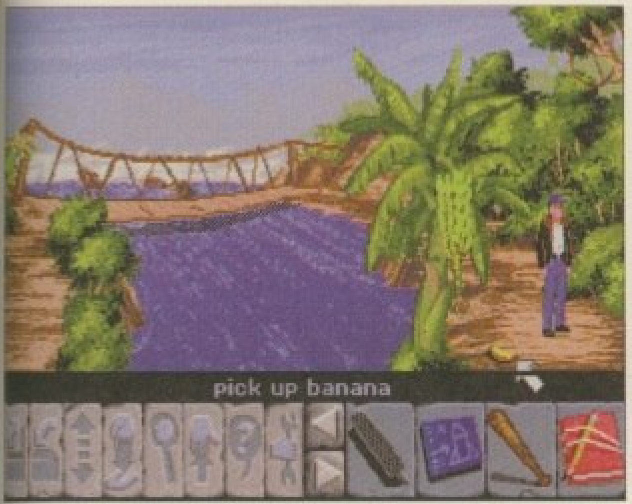
You could also compare this title to Indiana Jones because of the film-style plot. But as you'd expect, graphics have come on leaps and bounds since then and FOAQ certainly looks the part.



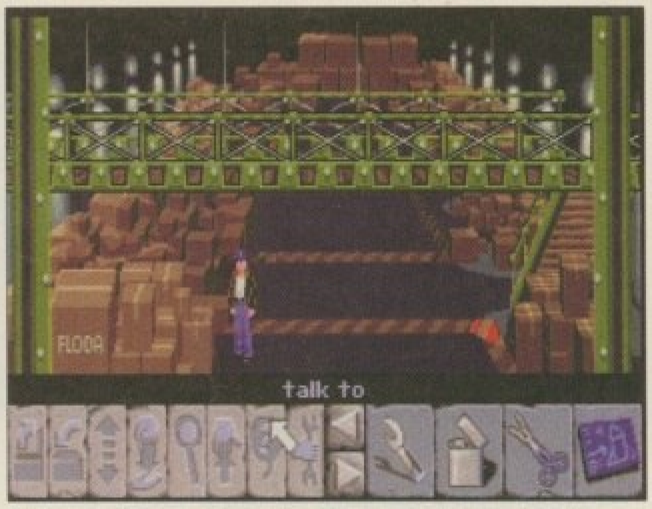
The glamorous film star looses patience with the hero, Joe King



Dialogue is usually relevant and adds to the theme of the movie-style plot



Clues are logical – you've found a banana now find a monkey (presumably)



Secret storage rooms can be uncovered by moving various objects

Flight of the Amazon Queen

Reviewed by Tina Hackett

> ‘Thanks to an imaginative setting, enjoyable puzzles and **intriguing plot**, it has all the ingredients to become a **timeless classic**’

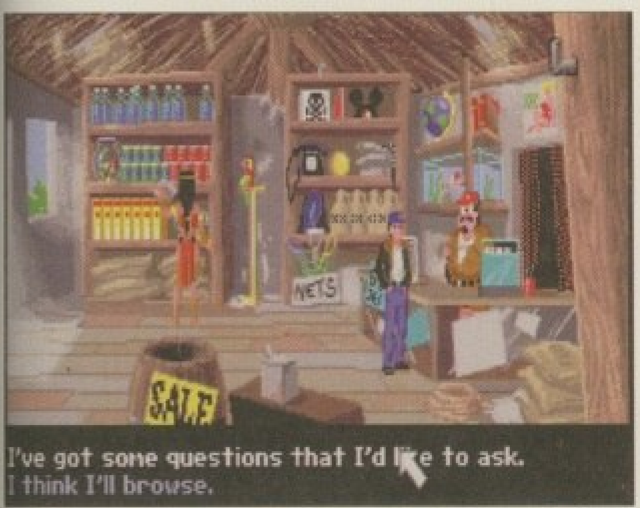
The clues are very logical too, without becoming overly simple, so they still remain challenging. For example, you have to find some milk to get a magic potion from the Witch Doctor. You have a coconut and a knife, et voilà – coconut milk. Firstly though, you will need to actually get the coconut from a monkey by swapping a banana with him. It's all a matter of keeping your eyes peeled and using the logical side of your brain. Another safety catch against going wrong is that it won't let you give away your carefully collected possessions to the wrong people at the wrong time. The only problem this might have is that hardened adventurers might find it a little on the easy side. Saying that though, it does get particularly taxing towards the end.

The presentation is also top notch, with a user-friendly icon system and well set out screens. Graphics keep to a cartoon style with some nice animations, and they all manage to conjure the atmosphere of the plot brilliantly.

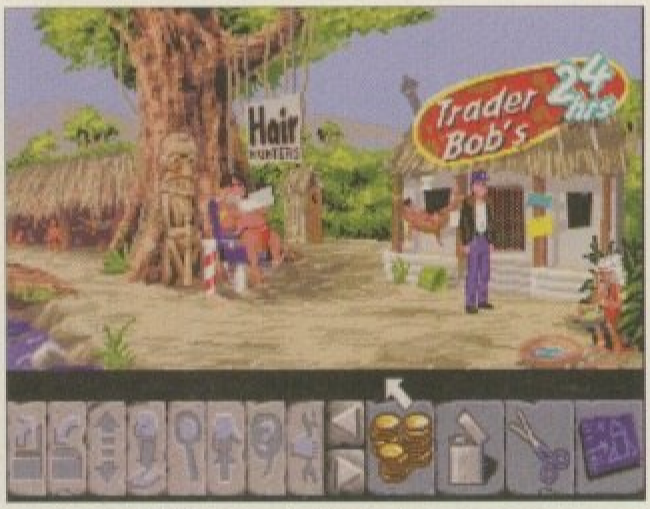
The character can wander freely between foreground and background and it works well in providing realism. Another innovative touch is the way in which you can use the pinnacle to move to each location. This gives you a bird's eye view of your surroundings and you can then click on the place you want to go to next. The music, though, can start to grate, although it does change according to location. Sound effects are a little sparse but they are at least relevant.

Each of the game's many characters has been imaginatively created. Joe is the stereotypical cocky hero and Faye, the haughty actress, which is perfect for the 1940's adventure theme. This provides for some entertaining dialogue.

Speech aims for witty repartee and despite some obvious double entendres, it works well. However, whether it would suit the younger player, I couldn't say.



When you are in engaged in conversation you must choose one of the multiple choice answers

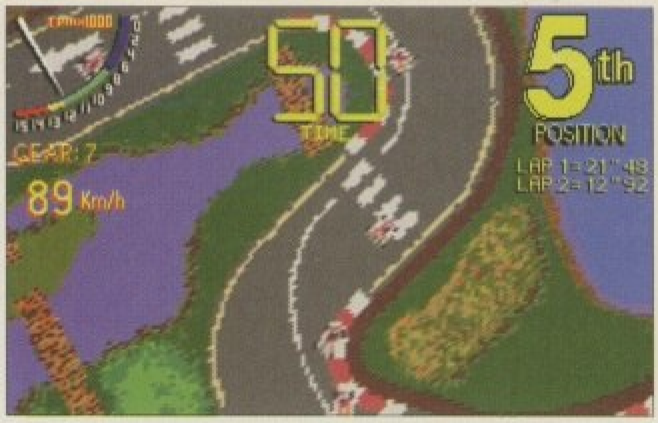


The witch doctor outside Trader Bob's could prove useful

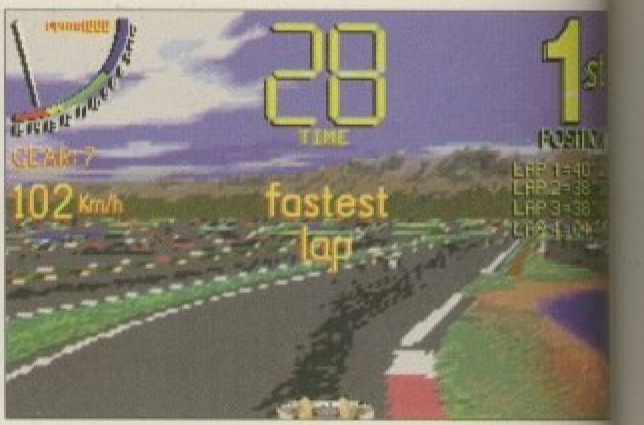
Final word

Adventure games have been done countless times before and I was doubtful that this would meet the mark. However, it comes pretty damn close and is one of the most enjoyable titles I've played for ages. Thanks to an imaginative setting, enjoyable puzzles, and intriguing plot, it has all the ingredients to become a timeless classic.

The developers have done a fine job in providing a quality Amiga title in this period of sub-standard releases and poor cash-ins. Let's hope this sells well enough to persuade Warner Interactive and Binary Illusions to continue releasing such excellent titles on the Amiga.



The 2D view is shown in all its glory. You can toggle this with various other angles and zoom controls



This is the 3D view which is zoomed out as far as it possibly can

GRAPHICS	71%
SOUND	76%
GAMEPLAY	80%
OVERALL	78%

PUBLISHER	OTM
DEVELOPER	Fabio Bizzetti
PRICE	£24.95
DISKS	2
HD INSTALL	Yes
SUPPORTS	A1200

Virtual Karting

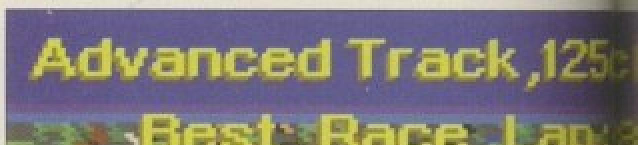
Reviewed by Andy Maddock

After a promising preview two or three months ago, Virtual Karting is now ready to fill up the rather blank looking Amiga shelves in games retailer's stores everywhere.

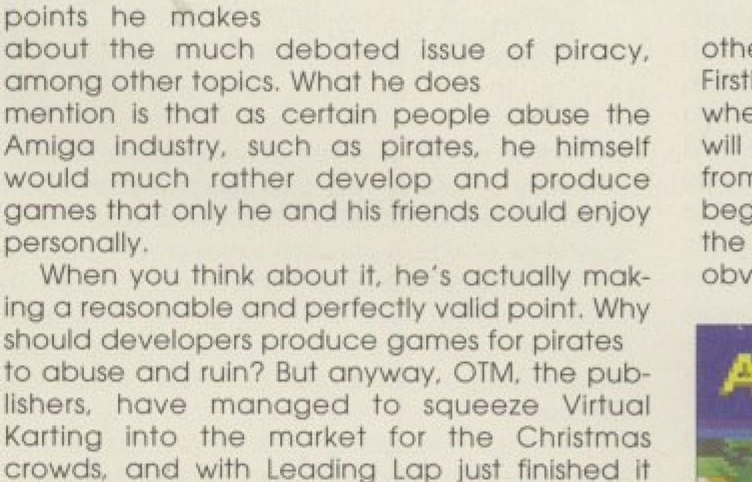
Fabio Bizetti, the author of Virtual Karting, has some very strong views on the Amiga and issues that surround it. I can quite readily agree with a number of the points he makes about the much debated issue of piracy, among other topics. What he does mention is that as certain people abuse the Amiga industry, such as pirates, he himself would much rather develop and produce games that only he and his friends could enjoy personally.

When you think about it, he's actually making a reasonable and perfectly valid point. Why should developers produce games for pirates to abuse and ruin? But anyway, OTM, the publishers, have managed to squeeze Virtual Karting into the market for the Christmas crowds, and with Leading Lap just finished it looks like it's going to be a festive fight.

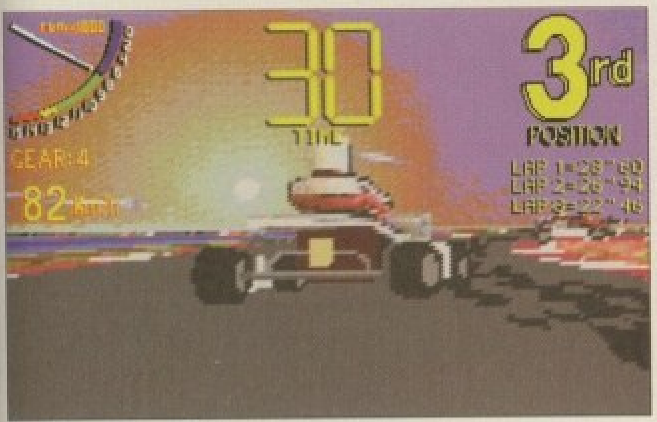
In the preview, as said before, Virtual Karting looked very promising. I've been trying to think back to the early days, attempting to recollect another karting game, but I'm afraid I keep failing miserably. As this is the only one in its particular genre, any karting fans out there will only be too happy to receive this cleverly wrapped present nestled snugly under the Christmas tree. The idea is to take on a series of other karters all competing for first place. Firstly, you have to race in a qualifier, and when your finishing time comes through you will be given a starting place on the grid, and from there you have to advance through the beginners, advanced and expert tracks. On the first beginner track you can see that you're obviously karting around France, specifically in



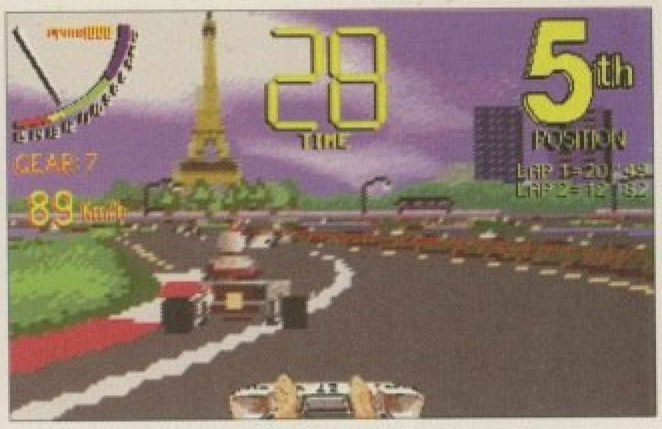
The fly-by view shows the special features, awkward bends, and possibly shortcuts



Life's a beach if you are a Virtual Karter, man



The graphics do look reasonable, it's only after a while that you begin to notice the odd graphical glitch here and there



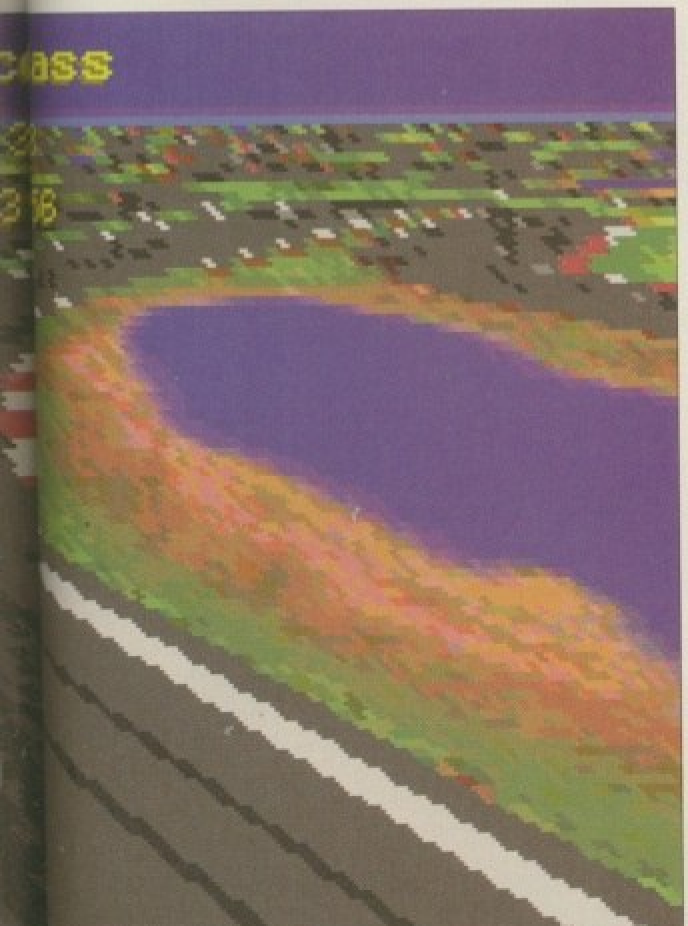
There it is! The tower. Anyone who's been to Paris to see the famous piece of history will realise it doesn't really look like this

Go karting

Karting is becoming more and more popular across the globe. Only recently I have noticed the world championships broadcast on satellite television. It's looks quite ridiculous because there are all these countries fighting it out just as seriously as in Formula One. Having said that though, karting is becoming even more popular than F1. Most people will never live to race around Silverstone in a Williams Honda, but you can quite readily race around a karting track somewhere in the world for a nominal fee.

If you've never tried it, I suggest you find the nearest track and get racing. It's one of the most action packed and exhilarating sport ever – in my opinion.

Paris. The Eiffel Tower is clearly lurking around in the background detail. From this you can see what great lengths the developers have gone to to produce the detail. Before you begin each race, you are shown a fly-by view of the entire track. Here you can plan out which corners are the best for overtaking, and check out any chicanes that may prove a problem. Also, identifying the pits is a must because stopping to rejuvenate your kart is essential if you want to be in with a chance of winning.



One of the finest touches included in VK is that when you press down on the accelerator you see your foot actually act – it's the same with the braking too. Instead of just a still picture of a kart on a moving track, these touches actually make that small difference in the realism. There are two karts to choose from. The 100cc is the less powerful of the two, although because of this the actual handling is far better. The 125cc kart is by far the faster of the two, so use of the brakes in all of the tracks is a necessity.

SPEED AND PLAYABILITY

There are two main angles from which you can view the action. The first is 3D which looks as if you are actually sitting in the kart. The 2D view is from above, much like a bird's eye view, and although it is far easier to handle the karts in 2D, it's difficult to see which corners are coming next.

If you would like to know what kind of technical specifications have been made to accommodate the speed of detail of VK, on an accelerated machine, Virtual karting runs at 50 frames per second which, to be honest, is quite spectacular. If you're running it on a standard 1200, it is slightly less impressive – running at a steady speed of 25 frames per second.

Fabio Bizetti pointed out that speed and playability was his main concentration during the development, and although this seems like a fair point, I can't help feeling that Amiga games-players will be wanting more in terms of graphics.

Final word

Overall, this product moves very swiftly, plays extremely well and certainly doesn't lack presentation. The only gripe is the manner in which it moves. Although technically it sounds far more superior to that of other racing games, the graphics become so annoyingly irritating, a headache is the only inevitable outcome, especially after a good half hour staring into the screen.

‘One of the **finest touches** included in VK is that when you press down on the accelerator you see your foot **actually act** – it's the same with the braking too’

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Title: Gloom, Scored: 81%
Reviewed: October, AC91

1995 was *the* year for Doom clones on the Amiga. We are still awaiting a finished copy of Alien Breed 3D and a Polish offering called Citadel, but in the meantime we have been gob-smacked by two games from publishers, Guildhall. The first was Gloom – and we thought it couldn't get any better...

Title: Fears , Scored: 92%
Reviewed: December, AC93

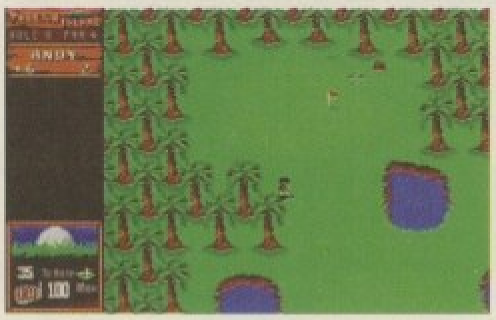


...but it did. Fears from Manyk software arrived only a few months later and resident reviewer Andy Maddock was so impressed by it's smooth scrolling and graphical superiority

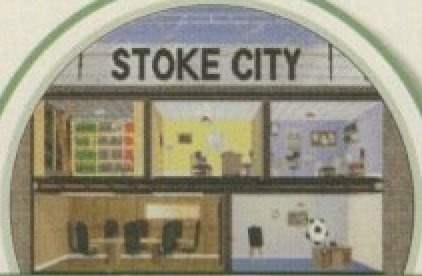
That was **the year** that was...

There have been some **classic games** released for the Amiga this year, System give you the round-up of the **best** games **(and the worst)** we've seen in 1995

Title: Sensible Golf , Scored: 89%
Reviewed: September, AC90

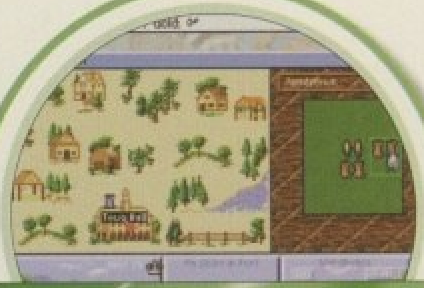


Probably Sensible Software's last ever Amiga game, they once again stamped their mark on a genre with a top quality golf game. It concentrated on giving the players a fun arcade challenge which was ideal for a multi-player match.



Title: Player Manager 2 , Scored: 94%
Reviewed: September, AC90

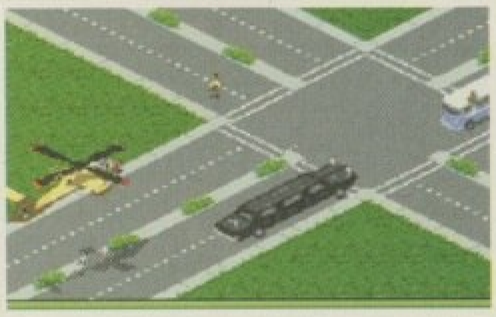
An immensely realistic football management sim, Player Manager 2 from Anco was awarded an impressive 94 per cent. Cited as "better than Ultimate Soccer Manager and On the Ball" it's got to be on every football fan's Christmas list.



Title: Colonization , Scored: 85%
Reviewed: September, AC90

Following on the success of his hit game Civilization, Sid Meier went on to develop Colonization. Okay, it wasn't a Civ beater but it was pretty damn close. This game was set in the historical period in which the America's were discovered, and puts you in the role of Viceroy of the New World.

Title: Jungle Strike , Scored: 85%
Reviewed: April, AC83



The sequel to Desert Strike got converted to the Amiga to much critical acclaim. A good mixture of strategy and arcade action, it challenged the player to control the helicopter and at the same time complete missions in a shoot-'em-up style.

Title: Pinball Illusions , Scored: 85%
Reviewed: January, AC82

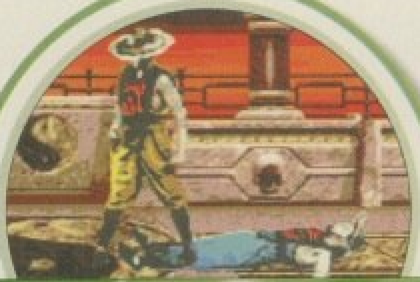


Digital Illusions' best pinball game to date is Pinball Illusions. It was made AGA only to incorporate a new Hi-res mode for multiball, boasted excellent graphics and realistic gameplay. If you've not already got Pinball Illusions then stick this on your Christmas list and *not* Pinball Mania.



Title: Super Skidmarks
Scored: 89% , Reviewed: May, AC86

Sequels can sometimes be a poor comparison to their predecessors. Fortunately, Super Skidmarks was a great improvement on the original with new cars including cows on wheels, and many screen modes which support up to four players. Very playable and very addictive.



Title: Mortal Kombat 2, Scored: 80%
Reviewed: February, AC83

This is the one that won me over this year – probably because it was the only game I could actually beat my colleagues at. It was a big improvement on the original and the graphics were by far the finest of any game in this genre. Special moves were quite difficult to pull off but when you could they were impressive, to say the least.

Title: Roadkill , Scored: 87%
Reviewed: January, AC82



This CD32 race-'em-up had reviewer Gareth Lofthouse sneaking back to the control pad. Developed by revered New Zealand company, Acid Software, it was described as "another triumph for a software house that can take a simple idea and make it shine."

Title: Sensible World of Soccer
Scored: 93%
Reviewed: January, AC92

Reviewed way back at the very beginning of the year was SWOS, the sequel to the hit football sim, Sensible Soccer. It's major difference was that it incorporated a management angle as well as the actual match. This went down a storm despite a few bugs which they later rectified by bringing out a bug fixer.



Christmas Turkeys

There have been some good games this year but there have also been the bad. System take a look at the titles that are definitely nominations for prize Turkey of the Year.

Title: *Shaq-Fu*
Scored: *30%*
Reviewed: *March, AC84*

Awful storyline, dreadful graphics and nil playability, this beat-'em-up license had them all – including cringeworthy sayings from the fighters such as "I may be small but you just lost big" and "I am too smart for your foolish style." It's worrying what some people consider frightening...

Title: *Ruffian*
Scored: *40%*
Reviewed: *May, AC86*

May had its fair share of abysmal games, in fact it was probably the worst month of the year for them. Ruffian, Whizz and Angst all raised their ugly heads and fell head long into the pit of bad review scores. Ruffian was a platformer and although there's nothing wrong with that if they're well done, it quite frankly wasn't with tired graphics and unoriginal gameplay.

Title: *Whizz*
Scored: *40%*
Reviewed: *May, AC86*

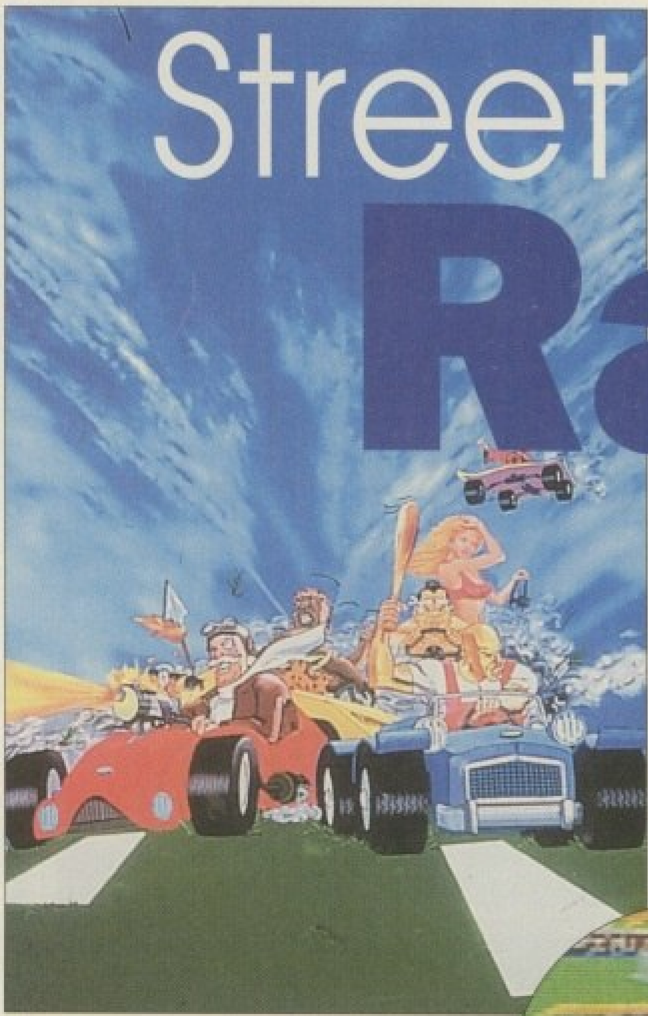
"How did such a turkey end up in the new Amiga Magic Pack?" we all wondered, faces blank as we remembered possibly one of the worst platformers of the year. Over-colourful graphics, and an annoyingly cute bunny character only made the frustration of the whole thing worse.

Title: *Angst*
Scored: *26%*
Reviewed: *May, AC86*

Oh dear, this one was certainly not well received when it landed in the office. In fact it was described as "about as exciting as a walk in a multi-storey car park", and our reviewer could only stick playing it for a couple of hours before he collapsed from boredom.

Street Racer

By Andy Maddock



> ‘ Street Racer includes all the characters, the **24 textured tracks**, and wait for it – three soccer pitches! ’

This particular racing game was released on the SNES about a year ago and with the Megadrive version recently following suit, it was highly likely that an Amiga version would follow. Street Racer on the Amiga is set to be released just in time for some festive fun courtesy of UBI Soft.

Vivid Image, the developers, are previously known for their past products, namely First and Second Samurai – both of which have proved to be very successful during the last year or two.

On the console formats, Street Racer gained respectable scores in most magazines. It featured fully textured tracks and a whole host of characters to choose from. It is said that Street Racer will push the A1200 to its absolute limit by including all the characters, the 24 textured tracks, and wait for it – the three soccer pitches!

Yes, that's right, not only is Street Racer a standard racing game like Gremlin's Lotus trilogy, but you can actually play football as well as battering the hell out of each other in the Rumble Arena.

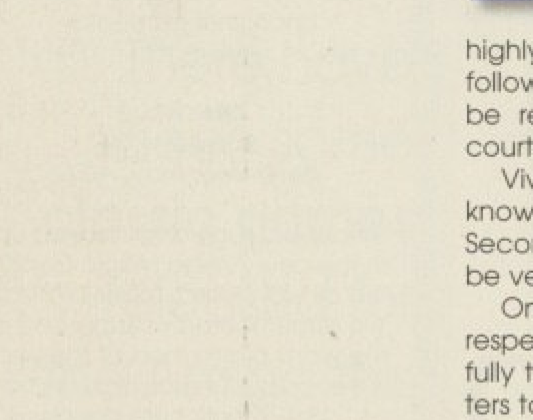
There will be eight characters in all – Sumo-San, Hodja, Raphael, Surf, Biff, Helmut, Frank and Suzulu. Not only do all these differ from each other by coming from different sides of the globe, they also boast many different abilities and special attributes.



There's the split screen option to race head-to-head if you're particularly popular, or the standard one-player championship trophies if your socialising abilities aren't what they should be.

If you can cast your minds back to when you used to be at school, do you remember playing football in the playground? I'm sure at some point you have taken part in what we called, 'One-man Wembley.' Well, Street Racer gives the opportunity to take part in this world-beating invention of a game.

For those of you who are completely baffled, I will explain. There were no teams you see. There was one goal, and the idea was to progress through each round by sticking the ball in the net. The last person to score is out! I can remember this game really well because I was always in the final (boast, boast) and we'd often miss lessons because of it. I'm telling you this because Street Racer includes this game, only here it's 'Two-man Wembley' where two players play as a team.



You can see from these MegaDrive screenshots that Street Racer is a very professionally designed product



The split screen option should hopefully be as fast as the single version in the finished product

Final word

We've only actually seen the Megadrive version, hence the screenshots. However, if the Amiga version can match the graphics and playability of the Megadrive version, UBI Soft will be on to a sure winner.

Street Racer will hopefully be in the shops by Christmas, and as a present it will certainly inject more excitement than slippers.

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Cup of tee?

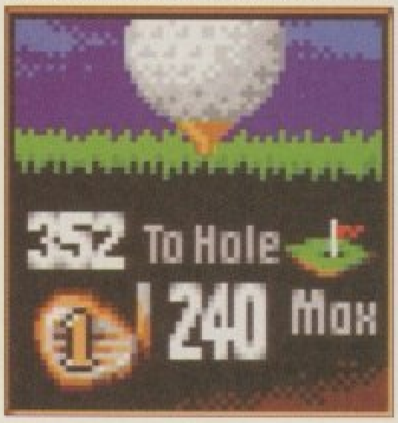
Before you begin any hole, always hold down the fire button to see the overhead map view. This is probably the best way of guiding your ball through the hazards. What you must not do is just look for the hole and aim for it - unless it's a par 3.

What you must do is look at the yardage for the entire hole. If it's say, 324 yards. That means it's 324 yards to the pin. If you are using a 1 wood then the ball will travel 240 yards - only if you hit it at full power without any wind assistance. Now you can work out, using the overhead screen, where roughly 200 yards would be. You can then select a particular position to place it. Obviously if you want to know where the ball will end up, it will probably finish around just under half-way between the tee and the pin.

This might not be much use, but if you want to know where roughly the ball finishes, helping you avoid bunkers and trees then this is undoubtedly the best method.

Bent clubbers

This is probably the most invaluable tip that will undoubtedly solve many of your problems. Before teeing off, the most important thing is to check the yardage, but this is rarely correct. The yardage that appears is supposed to be how far it is from the tee to the pin without any actual wind assistance. This certainly isn't the case. It would probably be correct if you were using a cannonball and a tank, but you're not, so if you understood the sarcasm you will need a new club. It will probably be just about accurate if you use one club above the one computer selects. This must be altered to two or even three if you are stuck in the rough.



It's a fairway to the top

After your first four or five holes, if you're playing a tournament, keep switching to and from the leaderboard to get an idea of the positions of all the other competitors. If you are leading, the best idea is to take things slowly and concentrate on each shot. If you have aspirations of hole-in-ones, you won't get very far. Even if playing safe involves playing the ball in a different direction to where the pin is situated, it will almost certainly help you in the long run.

If you are on the edge of your seat and you really don't want to mess up, especially if you are in a position like in a bunker or behind a tree - you will have the tiniest slice of red to press fire in. If this is the case, just reduce your club until it goes wider, until you know you can definitely react quick enough. You will lose out in yardage because it won't go as far, but it will give you an edge by setting you up perfectly for your next shot - this is a far more effective strategy than hitting and hoping.

If you happen to have had a bad game on the first few holes, the best escape route is to see who is ahead of you and see what score he's on, that way you will know what particular target you are aiming for and how many shots you can get away with - without dropping below the rest of the pack.





***Sensible Golf* can always be relied upon to bring you the most simple and realistic holes ever**



This should be no more than a simple putt – if you just move the pointer a little to the right

Sensible Golf

Having trouble with your **swing**? Not to sure where to **putt** it? Going **round** in circles? Then let Andy Maddock **iron** out the problems

Sliced bread

If you are attempting a hole that is either surrounded by trees, bunkers or other water hazards then these must be negotiated most carefully. For instance, if there's a huge fairway with a bunker on each side, aim your shot straight down the middle, don't try any fancy hooks or slices to gain better angles unless you are perfectly sure you won't end up in the sand or water

The best idea is always to play it simple - don't take any risks whatsoever, the chances are they probably won't come off.

Aim for that flag thing

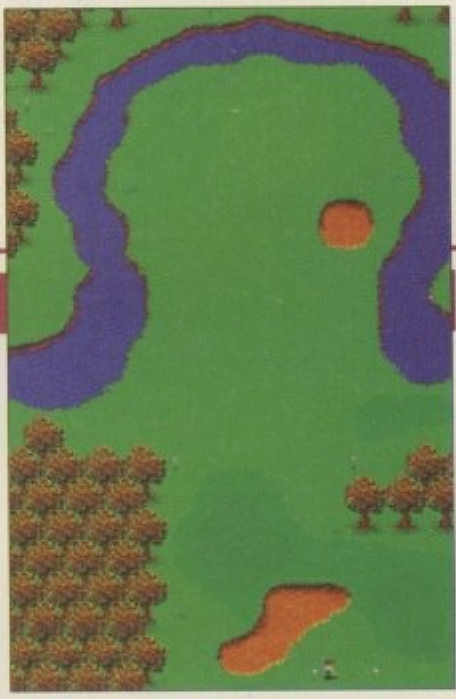
There aren't really any hard and fast rules about putting in Sensible Golf, but many people find the directional arrows on the green extremely deceiving. Don't look at the arrows as if the are representing uphill and downhill. The arrows mean the ball will travel in that particular direction.

One of the most awkward putts are the ones which have arrows pointing in one direction and then are reversed in the opposite direction - like a zig zag. All you can do here is just hit the ball straight and reasonably slowly, this way the arrows will have an equal effect on the ball.

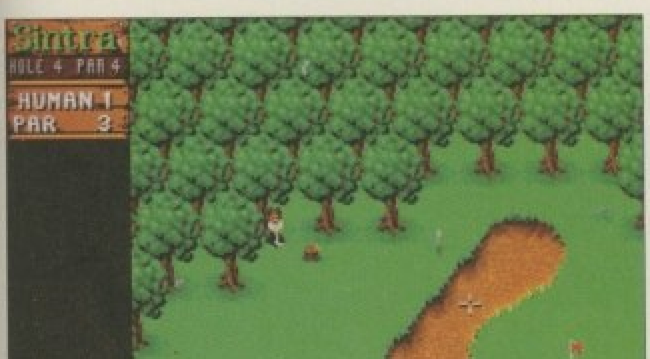
Ball bag

Here we have a typical par 3. It is 219 yards to the pin, and the computer selects a 2 wood, which at full power will reach 220. This sounds quite reasonable, again however, always knock the club up one, in this case, to a one wood.

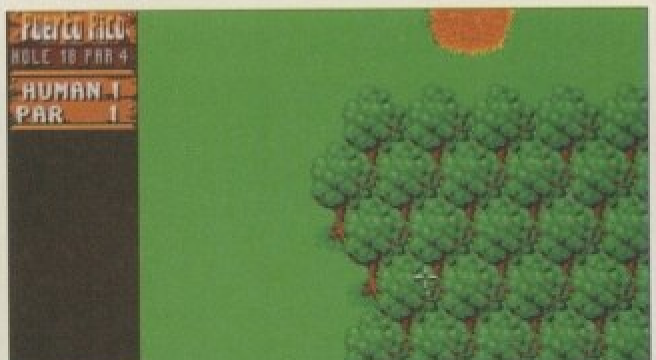
Although you have knocked the distance up to 20 yards, still make sure you are aiming for full power. With luck, it will drop just past the hole. If you can get the direction correct, a hole-in-one will almost certainly be yours.



This is a fairly easy hole. Although it says par 4, you can probably make the green in 2



Note the arrows on the green, you must allow for the extra direction if you manage to hit the flag



You must be careful not to clip the top of the trees when you attempt to get the ball on to the green

Practice makes money

That's about all the possible advice I can give, although, if you're still having trouble then I suggest you select 'Practice Holes' and try and improve your timing, reactions and accuracy. Hopefully your confidence will grow and you'll be able to take on the cream of the crop... good luck.

A s some of the bigger developers move over to other platforms, smaller companies start to come to the surface. This is no bad thing. It gives rise to undiscovered talent and new teams take up the challenge to keep the Amiga games market alive. This has a positive effect on the industry as fresh plans and innovative ideas come to the surface. With this in mind, we believe that these companies should get the coverage they deserve and each month we find out how they attempt to lead the revival for the Amiga.

This month we talk to Intersect Development, the team behind new AGA shooter, Atrophy.



Intersect Development look to break into the limelight with their first game

Trevor Mensah and Frank Tout are the partnership behind the as yet unheard of company, Intersect Development. Started back in 1992, the two created the label to develop new games for the Amiga with the mission to program the ultimate in Amiga game engines, something that would be technically superior to anything else that had gone before it. Mensah explains, "Our ethos is firstly to produce the best Amiga games and secondly to encourage and recruit talented Amiga enthusiasts into the business. We feel using new talent in this way will inject much needed life blood into the trade and help to revitalise the market with fresh ideas."

So what's all the fuss about? Why are a team that have been around for three years now seeking a spot in the limelight? Well, it has something to do with their forthcoming game - a ground breaking shoot-'em-up that promises to push the Amiga to its limits and make proper use of the AGA chipset. Mensah claims that the Amiga is the only computer capable of their game,



The game makes full use of the AGA chipset

Atrophy, "It simply could not be done on a PC. No, not even a 100Mhz Pentium! In fact if you own an AGA machine your looking at hardware that the top of the range PC owners would sell their right arm to have. We are using 35 and 70 nanosecond full-screen hardware scrolling, which for the mentally sane among us equates to quarter and half a pixel scrolling which is ultra smooth." He continues, "We feel both the Mac and PC have restrictive fixed address screen hardware architecture. They cannot scroll the screen without it shearing and generally looking like a dogs dinner."

But the fact remains, the Amiga games market is suffering a decline and the bigger companies are running in the opposite direction towards the sure fire money makers, so why do

> ‘We want the Amiga to survive and we hope we can help rebuild it back to its former glory days with some good solid games’

The story so far...

Atrophy is only a few weeks away from review, but in the meantime here's the games storyline. Involving a mad psychotic, "Saxon Priest", medical experimentation and doctors it has all the ingredients for a rather nasty Hammer Horror style plot. The doctors enter the patients mind and attempt to control his madness. Intersect describe it as 'pretty surreal' and incorporate the theme of fear into each level, for example, fear of underwater and even fear of fear itself. Mensah explains, "There's an accumulation of all his fears which makes Saxon Priest what he is, there is after all a very finite line between sanity and insanity. That was how the plot developed and the game was designed with the plot in mind."



Atrophy revolves around the plot of a doctor trying to control a psychotic by entering his mind

Light at the end of the tunnel

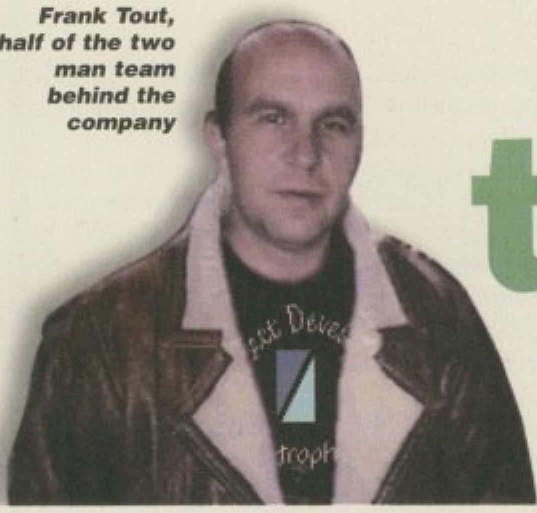
Following on from last month's interview with new developers, **Binary Emotions** we now take a look at **Intersect Developments**, another team showing the way for the Amiga.



There hasn't been an arcade shoot-'em-up for a while and this certainly looks like injecting some fresh ideas into the genre

humble beginnings

Trev's story: His original interest in Amiga games came from when he used to chat and visit friends, such as programmer Jules Burt and graphics artist Jon Law at DMS - they released such games as Trained Assassin, Shockwave, Drivin'-Force and Colditz. "Our friends in the industry suggested we should stop coding for fun and get down to writing some decent Amiga games. We did just that and are using all the knowledge and tricks discovered in our time spent coding on the Amiga scene and on the old 8-bit micros."
Frank's story: He started programming games on the C64 and once wrote a game for Destiny Software but before he was paid any royalties the company went bankrupt! He wasn't very happy to say the least - but this didn't stop him learning to code games on the Amiga.



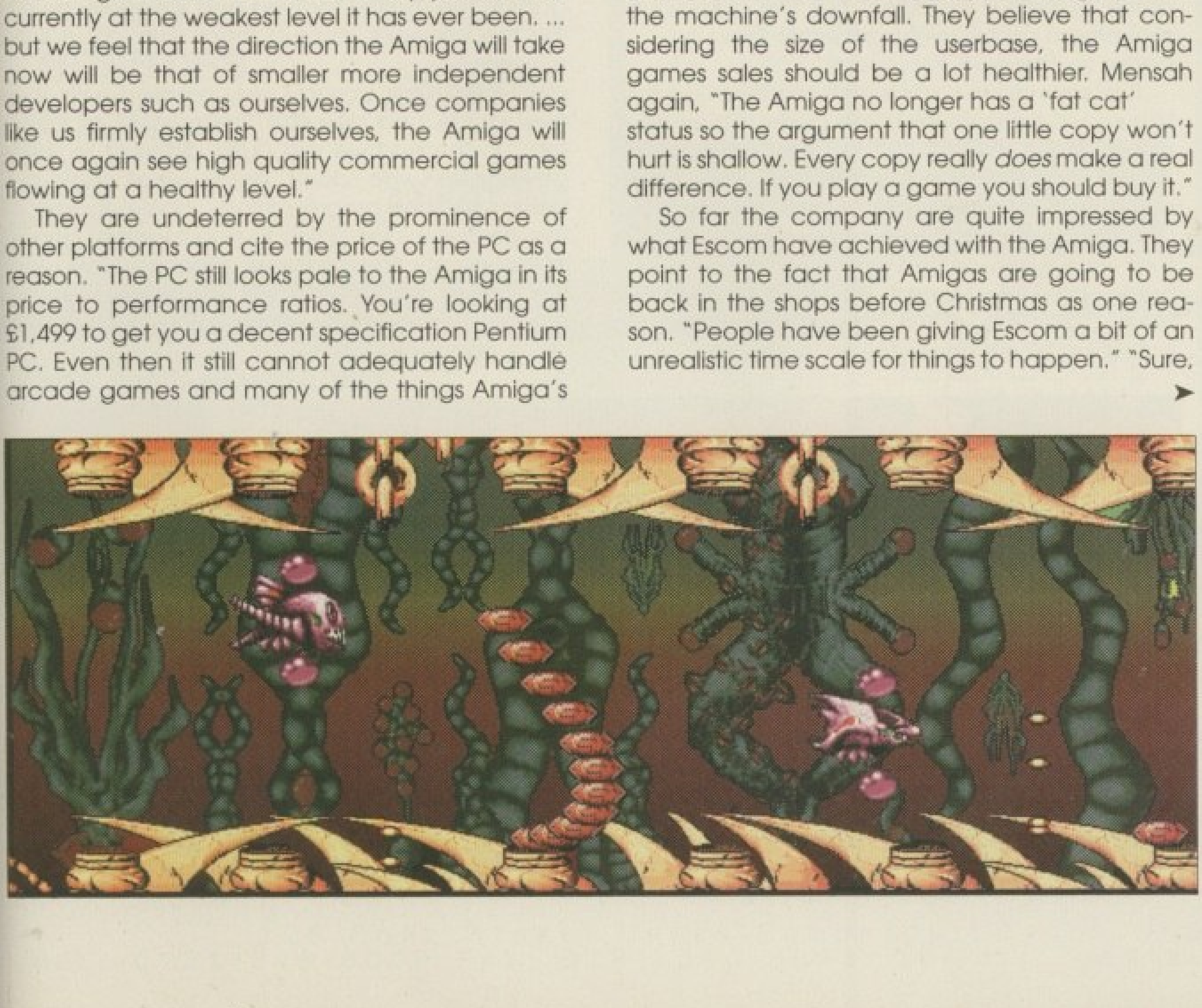
Frank Tout, half of the two man team behind the company

Intersect still have so much faith in the Amiga market? Mensah is keen to point out, "Yes, the Amiga market is in a transitory period and currently at the weakest level it has ever been. ... but we feel that the direction the Amiga will take now will be that of smaller more independent developers such as ourselves. Once companies like us firmly establish ourselves, the Amiga will once again see high quality commercial games flowing at a healthy level."

They are undeterred by the prominence of other platforms and cite the price of the PC as a reason. "The PC still looks pale to the Amiga in its price to performance ratios. You're looking at £1,499 to get you a decent specification Pentium PC. Even then it still cannot adequately handle arcade games and many of the things Amiga's have been breezing through for years." They feel that even the super consoles don't pose a threat, "Sure, the Sega Saturn and PlayStation do look impressive graphically but they are not real computers. Perhaps things would have been different if the PlayStation had been upgradable to a 'real' machine - then things may have looked a little different."

However, it's piracy they see as the real threat and believe that this has played a large part in the machine's downfall. They believe that considering the size of the userbase, the Amiga games sales should be a lot healthier. Mensah again, "The Amiga no longer has a 'fat cat' status so the argument that one little copy won't hurt is shallow. Every copy really *does* make a real difference. If you play a game you should buy it."

So far the company are quite impressed by what Escom have achieved with the Amiga. They point to the fact that Amigas are going to be back in the shops before Christmas as one reason. "People have been giving Escom a bit of an unrealistic time scale for things to happen." "Sure, ➤



Atrophy has taken only four months to develop



Smooth scrolling really makes this game



Impressive end of level guardians fill the screen inviting attack

Intersect can be contacted at:

People wishing to submit work for them to review regarding game projects can contact them at: InterSect Development, 13 Brunel Mews, Solsbro Road, TQ2 6QA. England. Tel: (+44) 01803 690 174.



they are selling A4000's at an unusually high price but for the market it's aimed at, multimedia and broadcasting, this is quite normal."

When we get on to the subject of the actual game Mensah describes it with all the fervour of a double glazing salesman, eager to point out all the benefits over its rivals, "Due to our technically superior AGA specific game engine we are able to offer much improved smoother scrolling, silky 50 frames per second movements of both screen display and bobs, faster gameplay pace, higher resolution graphics and inevitably from all this better gameplay!" He goes on to explain that the game engine was originally formulated using MC68000 assembly and standard OCS programming techniques for use on A500/A600 games. "When the AGA chipset was released we began to move the game engine towards the faster MC68020 and AGA architecture capabilities." He complains, "Many A1200 games fail to deliver because the code has not been significantly updated since its original inception on the A500's. Usually the cheap trick of a few nice AGA copperbars and 256 colour static pictures. Occasionally the extra odd bitplane of colour is added, but the games bob movement and scrolling generally looks no better for the AGA treatment."

It comes as no surprise to learn that Guildhall Leisure will be publishing the game - they have shown themselves to be firm supporters of the Amiga over the past few months with a great number of releases including no less than two Doom-type games and Super Skidmarks. All titles that were well received by the Amiga press and public alike. As Mensah points out, "Guildhall have a sensible down to earth approach to publishing so we chose to use them. Their business strategy is formed from past experience and judging by their publishing successes of the past, its been well founded. Their Managing Director, Giles Hunter, has obviously seen the gaps in the market forming and is eagerly awaiting the chances to plug them with good solid releases."

Intersect are already very pleased with their new game and describe the process as being fun, "In the end we are quite different to other developers who don't enjoy what they are doing. We love programming... and because of this we are not just going to slap together games of low quality for quick easy money." " We want the Amiga to survive and we hope we can rebuild it back to its former glory games with some good solid games."

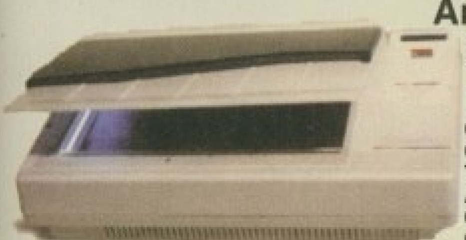
Hopes for the Amiga

Intersect hope to see Escom get the Amiga back on its feet and have many a word of advice for them. They believe that if Escom decide to push the Amiga away from its roots of well rounded design and custom chip accessible hardware, it could prove fatal. They also have ideas for their dream Amiga. "An idealistic Amiga from our point of view would be one with some more hardware sprites, perhaps a nice DSP/16 bit, 24 channel sound along with Hardware rotation/vector polygon chip and upgraded 32-bit blitter. This would completely transform the Amiga to dizzy heights way beyond the PlayStation or Saturn toys of this world - and it would be a real computer too! All this without even muttering the word 'RISC'."



Intersect describe the process of making the game as great fun

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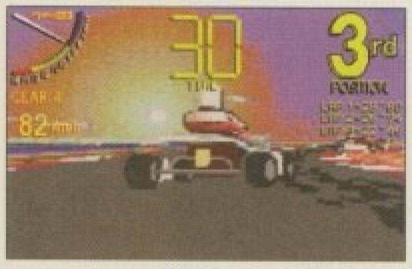
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Absolutely Fabio

System talk to the games programmer **Fabio Bizzetti** to gets his views on the Amiga, the market and his game.



Bizzetti's love of go-karting led to this 3D driving game

How did you come up with the idea for Virtual Karting?

I am extremely passionate about karts so it was a must to do an extremely realistic and playable karting game.

How long has it taken to develop Virtual Karting?

Well, more than a year, but I also made my HLA programming language which is like an expert system. Because of this and my knowledge from Virtual Karting, the next one should take less time, the next one even less, and so on - every time with considerably improved quality. My next project, StarFighter, is a massive jump ahead from Virtual Karting already.

How did you first start programming on the Amiga?

Like every hobbyist I think. I bought an obsolete Vic20 when I was 13-years old and learnt the Assembly language. A year later I bought my Amiga 500 and continued my hobby from there. This would have been impossible if I had bought a console and I believe it would have been inconceivable to learn Assembly programming on a PC. I would have needed thousands of books just to learn about every sound board that comes out.

> ‘ A great future for the Amiga philosophy is still possible - Commodore had engineers that were ingenious in their job ’



What do you hope to do next?

Simply to use my know-how in programming to make the Amiga great. It's not a hope, it's definitely possible. My next project is StarFighter, a game with features I haven't seen on the PC or consoles yet - and it's only for the Amiga. StarFighter is still a game idea for an unexpanded A1200 and I will continue to respect the hardware standards of the Amiga, but an upgrade of the machine would be a very wise move. I believe the only thing the Amiga lacks to compete with Pentiums is some FastRAM and a faster CPU. The Amiga architecture has no rivals - it needs less resources to do a better job.

What advice would you give to people trying to break into the industry?

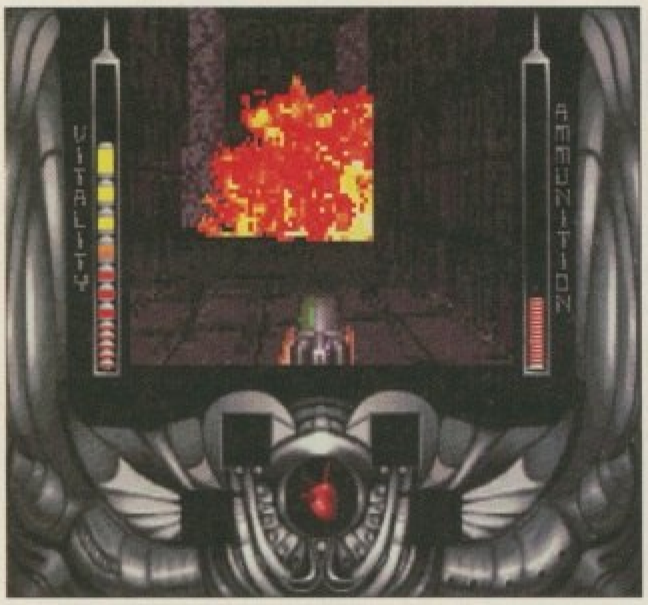
If they are hobbyist programmers, the advice I can give them is to aim at the best quality possible and then approach some reliable publishers. I think the Amiga games market is still promising. If you want to make a hobby and a good job at the same time, it can be your future.

Do you think Amiga Technologies will lead a revival for the Amiga?

I really hope so but at the moment I am cautious about giving a reply. Surely they will need to upgrade the future machines: in the next era of PowerPC computers, the Amiga could get a respectable market only if it is a high performance computer at a low price. It would be a bad idea to sell only the Operating System of the Amiga to PowerPC users. The Amiga philosophy could still have a great future - Commodore had engineers that were ingenious in their job. It's all in the hands of Escom - if they give the will and the money to invest in the next generation of RISC Amigas (I hope using an evolution of the Hombre project, but very expandable), then we can begin to smile.

Do you think enough has been done to deter piracy in the industry?

Nothing will ever change the mind of the crackers., In Poland the price for programs and games are really unfair. The best crackers are Polish people, so you can imagine they feel 'justified' for their actions, and I won't argue about this. But the same cracked programs come over to the rest of Europe, where many people that could easily buy the originals prefer to *buy* the pirated one.



Alien Breed is full of excellent explosions which add realism to the game immensely



Long corridors with beasts at the end. That's what it all tends to boil down to, unfortunately

GRAPHICS	91%
SOUND	88%
GAMEPLAY	90%
OVERALL	91%

PUBLISHER	Ocean
DEVELOPER	Team 17
PRICE	£29.99
DISKS	2
HD INSTALL	Yes
SUPPORTS	A1200/A4000

This happens to be the only first-person perspective game I've heard so much about but never seen any real concrete evidence to confirm what the final version would be like. In the light of other magazines reviewing unfinished versions, we waited absolute ages for the final version to appear so that you, the readers, would know exactly what you were putting your hard-earned cash towards.



After the prequels, namely Alien Breed, Alien Breed '92 and Alien Breed... something, it was quite a shock to hear that the one of the most popular overhead shoot-'em-ups was going to be relegated to the division of the Doom clones. However, after looking at Team 17's past successes, it would be naive of me to knock it after they have been so consistent with their extremely healthy contributions to the Amiga world.

To be honest, I've yet to see a Doom clone with a plot. Well, a decent one at least. What the programmers do is spend all their man hours tweaking graphics and gameplay and about a week before the game is due to be released, the whole team of developers spend 15 minutes thinking up a suitable plot. You can put money on the fact they'll all come up with 'Right, you're stuck in a big dungeon and this evil man is coming after you. Okay, what now? That's it. You've to get out – blasting your way through hoards of ugly monsters!'

What really gets me is the fact that if you want to get out, why did you go in there in the first place? Doh! Why don't developers make a game which is called 'The Realms of Darkness – I'm not going in. I'm frightened.'

I apologise. I had to get that off my chest – I'm only just getting over a lethal overdose of Doom games.

The first thing I noticed as I began walking around is the screen – it's smaller than Gloom and Fears, although bigger than Citadel. It does look more like Doom than any other efforts and if the speed could be matched then it would be unstoppable.

The main thing that really affects the game immensely is the specification of your Amiga. If you've got an accelerator then the games are absolutely brilliant. If you haven't, the

The only downside

If I have to point out a major flaw in all these games, then it has to be the system requirements. Although you can quite happily play any Doom game on a standard A1200, don't expect it to run at a realistic rate. If you really do insist on playing Doom on the Amiga, there is no doubt that you need an accelerator. Without one, its frustration factor increases tenfold, especially as you will find it difficult to control. These games can only be played properly on an expanded Amiga, trust me.



Hitting enter will bring Alien Breed into full screen mode, although you will lose the status display



You can see Alien Breed has a very small playing screen – displaying your status down either side



The beasts range from vicious dogs to space marines which will do anything to stop you from passing

Alien Breed 3D

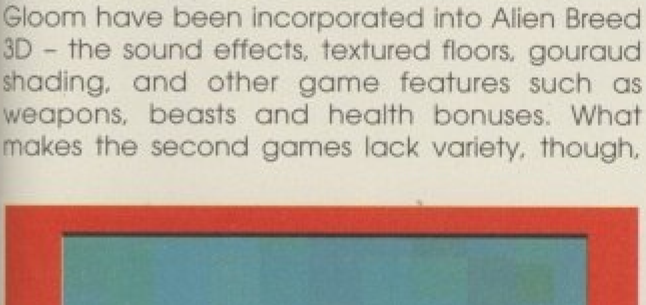


Reviewed by Andy Maddock

games are slow and uncontrollable and can often cause more frustration than you can humanly imagine.

One good thing about Alien Breed is that there is a plot. And although it only really makes an appearance in the manual, it still gives an atmospheric introduction into the game itself.

All the features that were included in Fears and Gloom have been incorporated into Alien Breed 3D – the sound effects, textured floors, gouraud shading, and other game features such as weapons, beasts and health bonuses. What makes the second games lack variety, though, are the really badly drawn, almost cartoon-like beasts which really do let the game down enormously. Although this is the same sort of problem Fears suffered from, they didn't look quite as unrealistic as in AB3D.



This screen may confuse most of you, although actuall it's just a close-up!

The mazes are huge with plenty of rooms to explore. On your way through you can collect keys, open doors, gather med-packs to replenish your energy, and ammo to top up your current weapon.

The major problem with Fears was the fact it was too easy and you could continue quite easily get to level five or six without losing a life. Alien Breed will frustrate you enough to make you lose a life on the first level, never mind five or six.

As for the war of the Doomers, top of your list should be Fears because of its wonderful look and control, closely followed by Alien Breed 3D because it's absolutely brilliant to play. In third place is Gloom – a good solid shoot-'em-up, although missing the depth and challenge Fears and AB3D feature.

Alien Breed 3D is, and always will be, one of the finest Doom clones on the Amiga. Most people, including me said it couldn't be done – I have just been proven wrong... twice.

' Alien Breed 3D is, and always will be, one of the **finest Doom clones** on the Amiga '

Final word

As it turns out my prediction was correct. Although Alien Breed 3D isn't quite as action packed as the first series was, especially where lastability is concerned, it still adds up to be an extremely worthy purchase. This is one game that you would never be forgiven for missing.

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NFA have been serving the Amiga 'scene' recently with an amazing amount of effort. Well known in the UK for their Bodyshop series, excellent AGA-only Word disk magazine and programs such as 'Balls', 'Boomin Eck' and 'enLock' present their first CD for the Amiga. Unlike other scene releases, this contains AGA PD from the last 3 years of which 90% will run straight from the CD! Contains the best WB3+ utilities and creative software (100MB), the greatest AGA games (100MB), high quality AGA slideshows (150MB), the most outstanding AGA demos (200MB), entertaining and informative disk magazines and the best of the rest including the licenced Amiga Reports and all the Amiga 'Doom' clones. NFA have also compiled loads of exclusive wares for the CD: slideshows, Klondike cards and more. All this and contained in superb exclusive raytraced iconified drawers set within a Magic Workbench environment makes the CD an absolute pleasure to use! This CD would make a superb Xmas present for any A1200 or A4000 user with a CD-Rom. TRADE details and prices available on request.

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BRAND NEW RELEASE

LSD VOLUME III

This CD contains hundreds of MB's of data from many sources, most of which have never before been included on a CD-Rom at the time of release! Contains a broad spectrum of software in both ready-to-run and archived formats: demos, diskmags, comms and computing, AGA and ECS anims and pictures, music modules, original clipart, source code, games (incl. ASI games from 221-250), utils, graphics, ready-to-run 'HD only' AGA demos, dozens of original WB backdrops and much more! AmigaGuide interface.

new release! **£18.99**

17BIT DIMENSION V

Following on from the highly successful Phase 4 CD-Rom this CD contains hundreds of megabytes of data from the 17Bit Software Amiga PD library. The 5th disc in this series contains only the very best, hand selected, software including demos, games, utilities, graphics, artwork, disk magazines, music modules and mucg more. The CD is centered around an AmigaGuide style interface which allows you to read about each disk and then un-dms the disks to floppy. You cannot un-dms to RAD: with this release.

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SCI-FI SENSATIONS

SCI-FI Sensations is an exiting new CD-Rom containing over 1000MB's of science fiction images, music, animations, 3D objects for Imagine and Lightwave, sound FX, documents/text, themtunes, information and SCI-FI games. Categories include Babylon 5, Startrek (the Original, TNG, Deep Space Nine, Voyager and the films), Batman, Dr. Who, Thunderbirds, Robocop, Bladerunner, Aliens, 2001, Battlestar Galactica, TRON, Total Recall and many other films. All the information is ready to run from the CD. Amiga, PC and MAC.

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Hottest 5 contains some of the very best games, demos, utilities, animations, slideshows and more from October to early February this year. This CD also comes with a 50-page black and white booklet and BBS support on the compact disc itself.

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An Almathera collection, reviewed in this months magazine consisting of ten CDs. They are: Team Yankee, Pandora's CD, World Vista Atlas, Illustrated Shakespeare, CDPD1, CDPD2, Demo 1, Comms and Networking, Fonts & Clipart and Photo Library CD

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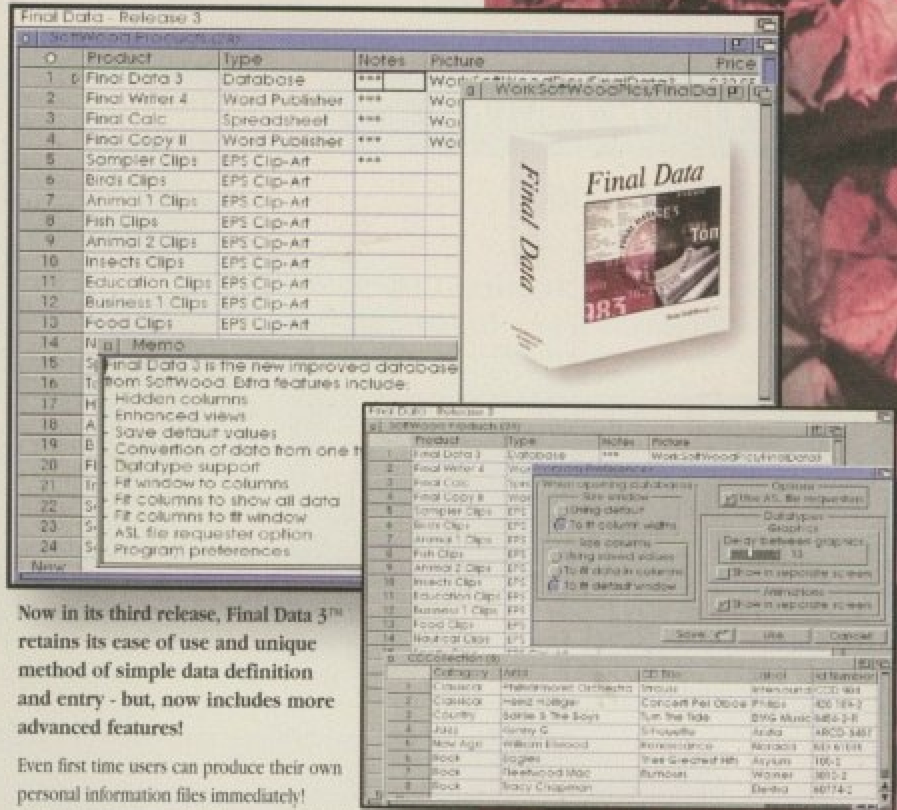
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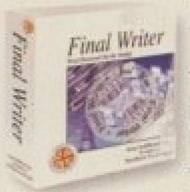
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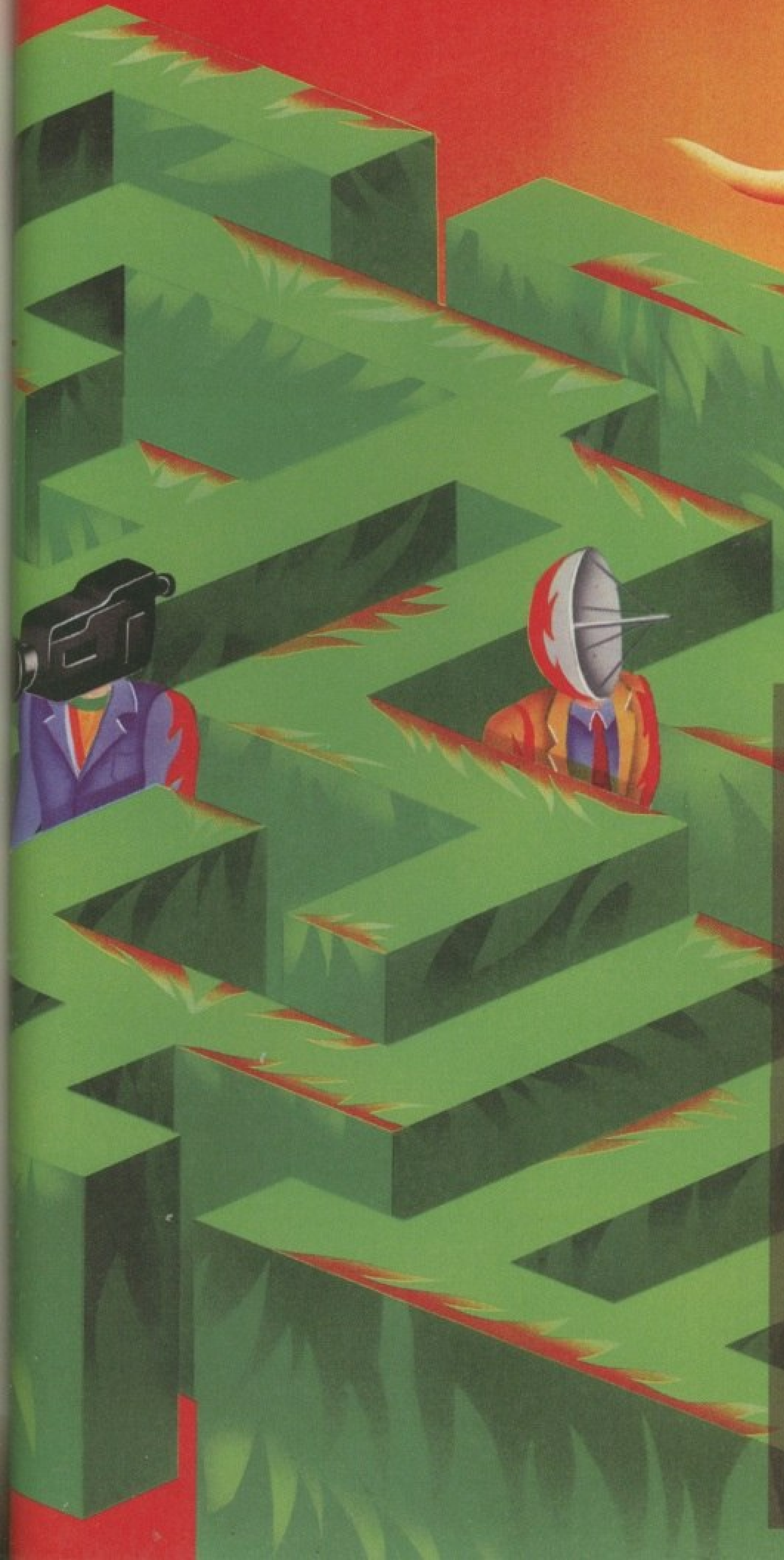
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Music 133
Technosound Turbo 2 goes under the scrutiny of Paul Overaa

Amos 135
Phil South guides you around a few of the popular Amos Internet sites

ARexx 137
Paul Overaa demonstrates how to get ARexx scripts receiving messages

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BT and the Labour Party's plans for the Information Superhighway

Publishing 141
Frank Nord unwraps the big business of commercial packaging design

Video 143
Gary Whiteley's second look at fonts in video

Starting from scratch

Frank Nord goes back to basics for all those beginners out there

Amiga Medical Part 12



Mornin', or evenin', whichever. Here we are again with useful tricks and tips for getting the most from your Workbench. Seeing that we are being joined by readers new to the Amiga, having just bought one of the new Magic Packs, I thought we might well look at some hints for first-timers.

Let's begin with the anatomy of a disk. Disks basically come in two varieties, floppy or hard. While floppy disks these days might not seem so floppy, they are thus named because the recording material itself is a disc of magnetic material, which **is** quite floppy, encased in hard plastic.

A hard drive consists of similar, but definitely stiffer disks, stacked one above the other with reading heads between, a bit like a stack of record turntables. These are all then encased in metal to prevent any shifting of the disks, known as platters. The reason for this is that each platter is only separated from its neighbour by a matter of millimetres, and the reading head is only microns above each platter. So much for the physical aspects of the disk, what about the mechanics as regards computers?

FORMATTED

Well now you're talking. All disks, whether floppy or hard, have to be formatted. This is like (I hope I'm not being too patronising here) teaching the disk how to speak Amiga-ese (or should that be Amigan?). The formatting operation sets up the 80 tracks on an Amiga floppy (numbered 0 to 79) in about a minute and a half, although if you have already used the disk as an Amiga floppy and merely want to clear all the information off it, you can do a quick format which only takes about ten seconds.

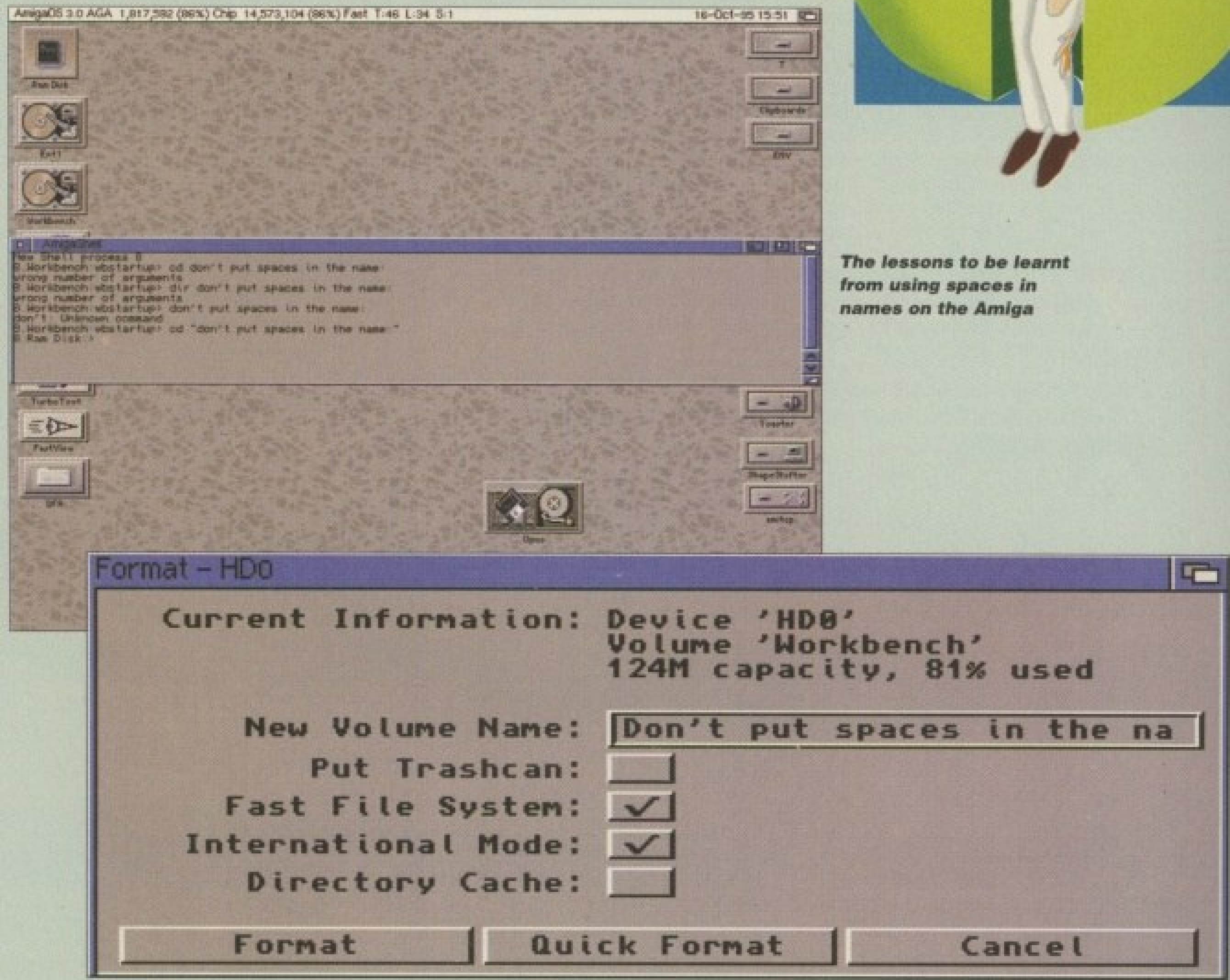
The reason for this is that all a quick format does is tell the disk it is empty. It doesn't reformat all the tracks, so whatever information is on the disk is still on there (you just need special software to see it), it's just that it can be overwritten with new information. Of course, if you have had read/write errors on a floppy, you shouldn't simply quick format it as this will not usually resolve the problem. A hard drive is a bit different and can take a lot longer to format, although a quick format will still take about the same time as a floppy disk.

If you could only afford to buy a floppy-based A1200, then I would save your pennies for a hard drive as soon as possible. If you have struggled with swapping Workbench floppy disks continuously (I hope you are using back-up copies of your Workbench disks!), then booting from a hard drive will be like going from crawling on your belly to being able to fly. The reasons for this are not only the increased capacity of a hard drive, but also a massive increase in the speed at which the data can be read. A floppy disk will give you about 20k per second – compare that to about 1Mb a second for a slow hard drive, a speed increase of 5000%, and you'll see why hard drives are a necessity on other platforms.

But let's go back for a mo'. Earlier on I said that you need to format a disk before it is usable, but what of the attendant options in the format requester? Let's cover them one by one. The first option is what to call the disk. This defaults to 'Empty', but can be changed to anything you like. Try not to put spaces into the disk name if you can help it as this will only cause you problems later.

Onto the next option – the trashcan. The trashcan is a bit of a holdover from Workbench 1.3 and was stolen from the Mac. In my humble opinion, the trashcan is hardly ever used by anyone and takes up space on your floppy. The way it works is that instead of files being deleted directly from the drive, you move them into the trashcan. Then, if you are really sure you want to get rid of them, you can simply use the 'Empty Trash' menu item from the icons menu – a two-step process only really useful for the really indecisive.

Well now, we seem to have run out of space for this month, so next month we'll go onto those other options in the format window and cover them. In the meantime, if you really feel the need to format a disk, don't use the trashcan, do turn on FFS and FFS International, and don't put spaces in your disk names.



The lessons to be learnt from using spaces in names on the Amiga

What's in a name?

Naming a disk is a thorny topic for Amiga users because of the problems inherent in using a name with spaces in it. You could capitalise the initial letter of each word you use; 'ThisIsMyDisk', which is perfectly readable and transparent to AmigaDOS, or you could use the underscore character; 'this_is_also_my_disk', which is also fine, but I think looks a bit niminy-piminy.

So that's the name sorted out. If you're wondering why having a space in your disk (or directory, or file) name can cause problems, the reason is that the shell doesn't understand spaces. If you were to type 'CD this is my disk:' the shell would pop up a requester saying 'Please insert volume 'this' in any drive.' If you really want to use spaces then it means you have to type 'CD "this is my disk:"' instead. Much more hassle, I think you'll agree.

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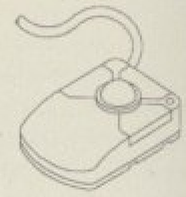
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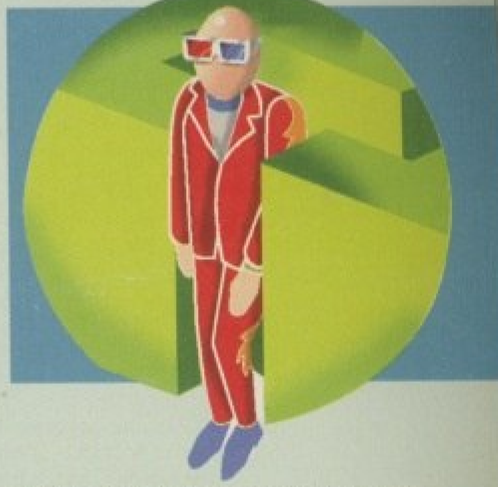
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A corporate classic

Paul Austin continues his easy guide to funky lookin' flyin' things

Amiga 3D Part 8



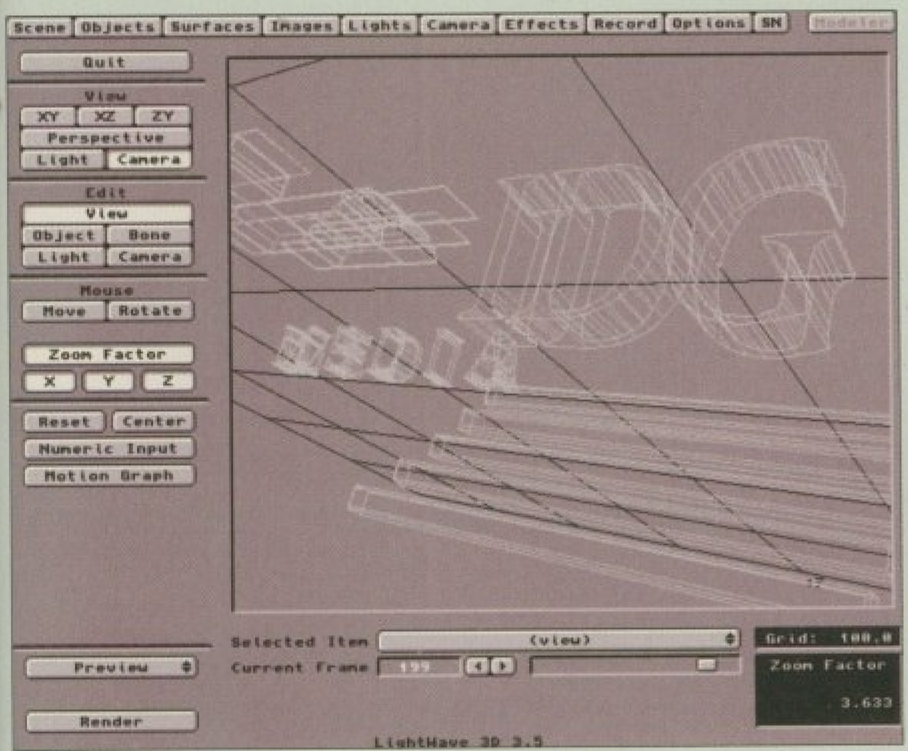
Being the sort of chap who likes to keep his promises, I'll be delivering the final chapter in the Amiga 3D guide to flying logos. Last month left off with the basic camera and object motion already in place. This time we'll be looking at fine tuning the motion paths plus the odd tip on object design.

When it comes to motion paths, attention to detail is all important. Even though the object in question may merely be gliding along a straight line, there's still plenty of scope for some much needed styling. If you neglect the way an object moves, all the effort invested in modelling and surfacing can be wasted. Perception of movement is something which we humans are particularly sensitive to. In short, if something looks even the tinniest bit peculiar or unprofessional it will be spotted and zoomed-in on, while all the hard graft in the rest of the scene gets overlooked.

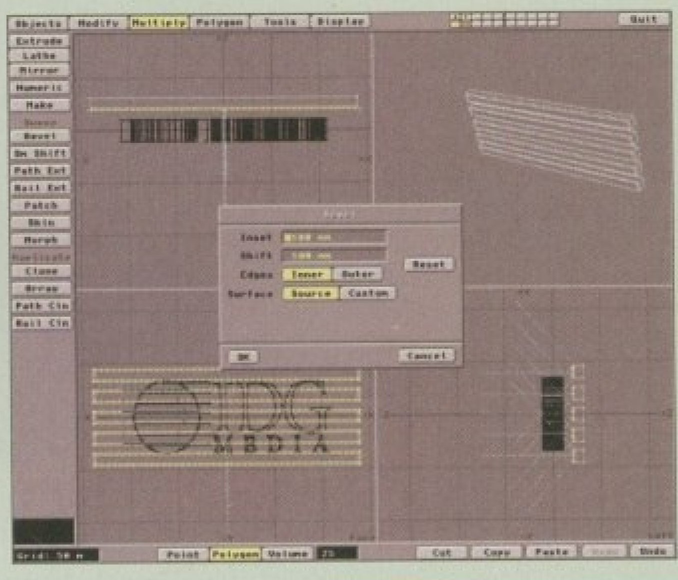
One of the simplest rules is to make copious use of spline paths to add ease-in ease-out to motion paths. This helps to make a simple linear motion into a much more natural and stylish transition. The cardinal sin of logo design is to let elements simply slam into position. Obviously, a little additional effort is required, especially within scenes that contain a lot of objects, but believe me it's time well spent.

Another trick employed to great effect in our example was the addition of object dissolves when required. During the outro section the camera angle meant that certain objects had much further to travel in order to clear the frame. The simplest solution would be to just move them further away. Unfortunately, this results in a lack of continuity as the individual elements become exactly that, individuals, all doing their own thing rather than being an integral part of the overall production.

The solution is to employ object dissolve on the wayward elements, the result being a transition which still retains continuity, transition speed, and the overall fluidity of the anim, while delivering the essential black screen end frame essential for looping.



A wireframe example of our corporate classic



Getting everything in position within modeller is essential if you want to avoid wasting time in layout

Modelling options

One of the keys to any successful animation is variety of movement. Simply flying one or two objects on screen simply doesn't cut the mustard when it comes to effective corporate productions. The key is variety, and to achieve it you need to start implementing your ideas right from the off. In our example, copious use of layers was essential to achieve proper scale and placement, while retaining the independence for the individual elements that eventually bring the animation to life.

The first step is to define the basic design of the logo, a process which is often done for you by the actual subject matter – in this case the IDG logo. Having said that, the logo itself may not always have enough impact in itself to really make for an exciting image. The basic IDG masthead falls into this category, therefore the bevel bars were added to breath a little extra into the design.

The actual logo was originally imported via Pixel Pro II from an ESP file, extruded and then segmented into the individual objects required for the animation. The assorted bits were cut and pasted into new layers and then saved under separate file names.

Remember: it's important to keep renaming the surfaces in order to get the appropriate texture and surfacing in Layout. Once the IDG logo and emblem were in place, the word 'Media' was added, scaled and placed in a separate layer.

Next the bevel bars were added using the logo in a background layer to define the appropriate scale and placement. The bars themselves, consisting of a simple box, was mirrored accordingly. The front faces were then selected and the bevel option applied. Again, it's important to remember to re-select these faces and cut and paste them back into position, otherwise smoothing in will round them off in layout.

In most productions involving text, bevels are almost a prerequisite for adding that final touch of class to a production. Although simple tools of the trade, their addition often adds that touch of class which elevates the whole production. Aside from giving the text a more sculptured look, bevels actually generate highlights and can therefore provide some much needed sparkle to the production.

Ironically enough, bevelling hasn't been applied to the text in our example, the reason being that the anim was designed to run as a 160 x 120 Quicktime/AVI movie within a computer-based marketing/ad sales presentation. In such a small resolution, finite detail would probably have detracted from the overall look, appearing as a rather odd pixelated artefact or error rather than a specular highlight/design point.

Assuming your design is complete and the various elements are already neatly stacked in the various layers, simply saving them out in situ would mean perfect positioning when the complete logo appears in layout.

The final task is the manual re-positioning of pivot points for the objects that require complex motion paths. Basically, that's all you'll need for perfectly respectable funky flyin' things. Have fun.

Identity parade

Assembler Part 17



Paul Overaa outlines the basics of writing code that is truly relocatable

On some machines, runnable programs are always loaded from the same starting location in memory. On the Amiga, as you'll probably know, the situation is different and programs can be loaded into any area of free memory that is available at the time. Because the AmigaDOS scatter loader takes care of the job of modifying any absolute addresses used within a program, the Amiga coder is therefore able to write position-dependent code, i.e. code containing absolute address references, knowing that AmigaDOS will take care of all the relocation issues when the program is executed.

There are, however, a few occasions where it is necessary to write truly relocatable code, i.e. code that (without any address modification) can be placed anywhere in memory and yet still remain runnable. Boot sector code is one such example. Another is when say you are writing an assembler routine to be used in conjunction with Amos (and some other Basic type languages).

A less important use is in speeding up the time it takes to load a program. With large programs you may have noticed that it takes much longer to load a program prior to execution than it takes to simply copy the same program file to memory (try it and see!). This is the relocation overhead showing itself and, if you write code that is truly relocatable, you'll find that not only does this time overhead disappear but the executable file on disk will also be smaller!

In order to be truly relocatable, all absolute address references within a program need to be removed and the way to do this is to use pc-relative addressing. This is very similar to the 680x0's register indirect addressing except that the address of the operand is specified with respect to the program counter rather than with respect to an address register.

There are no real difficulties involved in creating relocatable code as such, but there are a couple of things to bear in mind concerning the differences between loading data via pc-relative instructions, and the reverse process of storing data via pc-relative instructions. Basically, the 680x0 series doesn't allow pc-relative instructions to be used for specifying destination addresses, and this means that while instructions containing absolute source addresses such as:

```
lea     dos_name,a1
```

are easily translated to pc-relative form in this fashion:

```
lea     dos_name(pc),a1
```

the relocatable equivalent of the following instruction (which contains an absolute destination address):

```
move.l  d0,_DOSBase
```

has to be written as the instruction pair:

```
lea     _DOSBase(pc),a1
move.l  d0,(a1)
```

In other words we have to use a pc-relative form of the lea (load effective address) instruction to load an address register with the required destination address, and then use that address as a pointer for storing the data.

```
LINKLIB MACRO
        IFGT NARG-2
        FAIL        too many arguments
        ENDC
        move.l      a6,-(sp)
        move.l      \2,a6
        jsr                     \1(a6)
        move.l      (sp)+,a6
        ENDM

CALLSYS MACRO
        LINKLIB _LVO\1,\2
        ENDM

WRITEDOS MACRO
        movem.l     d1-d3,-(sp) preserve registers d1-d3
        move.l      \2,d1       DOS output file handle
        move.l      #\1,d2      start of message
        move.l      #\1_SIZEOF,d3           size of message
        CALLSYS     Write,_DOSBase          DOS call to write message
        movem.l     (sp)+,d1-d3 restore registers d1-d3
        ENDM
```

Listing 1: The original macros used in the November issue example.

```
LINKLIBR MACRO
        IFGT NARG-2
        FAIL        too many arguments
        ENDC
        move.l      a6,-(sp)
        move.l      \2(pc),a6
        jsr                     \1(a6)
        move.l      (sp)+,a6
        ENDM

CALLSYSR MACRO
        LINKLIBR _LVO\1,\2
        ENDM

WRITEDOSR.MACRO
        movem.l     a0/d1-d3,-(sp)          preserve registers
        move.l      \2(pc),d1   DOS output file handle
        lea         \1(pc),a0
        move.la0,d2 start of message
        move.l      #\1_SIZEOF,d3           size of message
        CALLSYSR    Write,_DOSBase          DOS call to write message
        movem.l     (sp)+,a0/d1-d3          restore registers
        ENDM
```

Listing 2: Modified macros that produce position-independent, ie relocatable, code.

An example translation

To give an illustration of position-independent code, I've translated the assembler example that was provided in the November issue (if you missed it – shame on you, but you can find a copy of the original source on this month's CoverDisk).

The program opened the dos library, obtained an _stdout handle for writing data back to the Shell, and then displayed some text using a macro called WRITEDOS which made use of the dos library's Write() function. This macro, along with the CALLSYS and LINKLIB macros used within the November program, is shown in listing 1, and the thing to notice is that both WRITEDOS and LINKLIB include statements which lead to absolute addresses being produced. For example LINKLIB includes this line:

```
move.l  \2,a6
```

which in a call such as:

```
CALLSYS Write,_DOSBase
```

results in this instruction being produced:

```
move.l  _DOSBase,a6
```

In other words the macro generates an absolute address reference and needless to say, this must be removed if we want to produce relocatable code. Listing 2, which comes from the source named 'reloc.s' which you'll also find on the CoverDisk, contains the equivalent macros in relocatable form. (I've added an 'R' to each of the names to emphasise that these changes have been made). You'll see that I've changed the offending LINKLIB macro line to this pc-relative form:

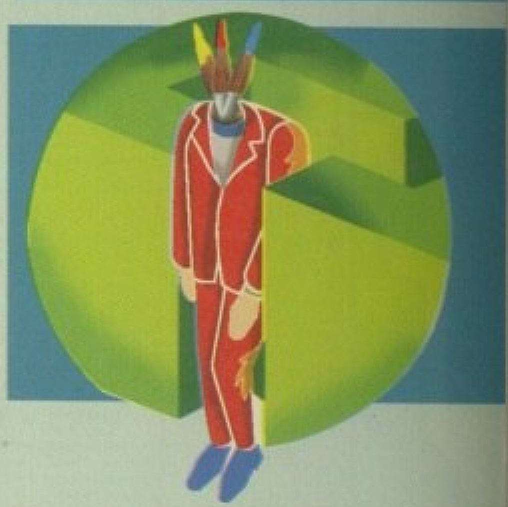
```
move.l  \2(pc),a6
```

and you'll find similar changes have been made to the WRITEDOS macro (now named WRITEDOSR) in order to ensure that it too then generates position independent code.

Despite the fact that converting existing code to relocatable form is a task that should be fairly straightforward, it's still easy to make silly slips (namely forgetting to remove the odd absolute address reference). Nowadays, many assemblers can protect you from such mistakes – Devpac, for instance, includes an option to check that program code is position-independent, and with this option activated any instructions that aren't relocatable will be flagged as errors!

Standing out

Amiga 2D Part 2



Design the different layers of your picture individually. You can then add effects without interfering with other layers

Steve White explains how you can make your 2D pictures really stand out with depth ordering and 3D emulation techniques

Last month I outlined the difficulties associated with backdrops and suggested hints and tips to make the process easier. In this issue I will be demonstrating a futuristic city scene which should allow you to pinpoint certain design tasks that cause the most problems for graphic designers

As mentioned before, the first stage in any design is to draw a rough on paper. By studying the rough you will be able to break the image down into layers – the city scene demonstrated here has four layers made up of the foreground building, two backdrop buildings, the city silhouette and special effects.

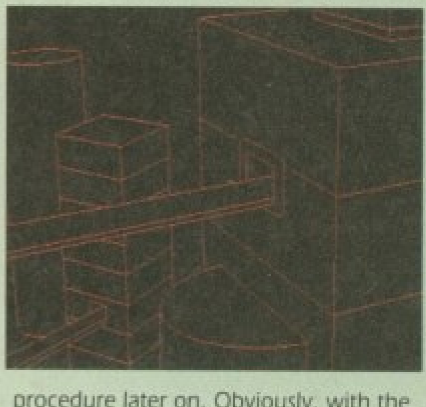
The actual skeleton for the entire design was created in Imagine which gives an accurate perspective to all the buildings in relationship with one another. Imagine is perfect for this kind of thing and you don't need a powerful Amiga to render in wireframe. If you have applications that excel at particular design tasks, then use them rather than spend precious time trying to create an effect in a single package.

With the skeleton completed it's time to start work on the actual image itself. Rather than adding detail immediately, start to lay down the base colours first (depth ordering) – this will take you

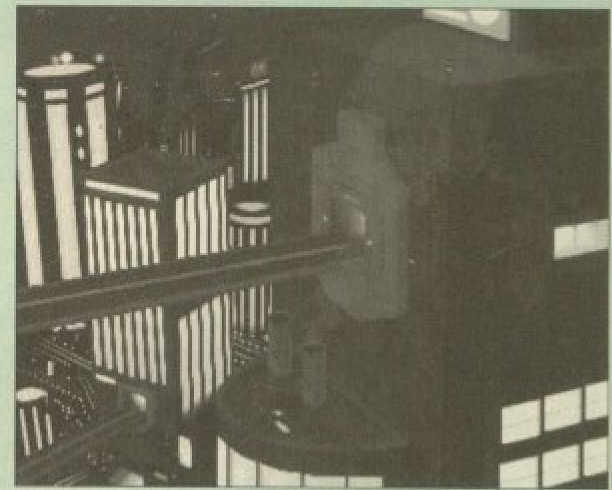


This city skeleton was created in Imagine using wireframe. By combining the power of several graphic applications you can speed up design time dramatically

some way to visualising the finished image. Laying down the colours in depth order is also very important if you are to use anti-aliasing (explained last issue). If you anti-alias an image onto another that hasn't been coloured yet you'll have to erase all the aliasing effects, and redo the



procedure later on. Obviously, with the city scene the primary base colours are the actual texture and colour of the brick work on the foreground building – in this example a dark grey. To add texture, use slightly darker shades of the base colour. Don't make the colour change between the base colour and texture to apparent otherwise the effect will be lost and may overshadow the more important elements of the image.



Here is the finished city scene. You can see how the different layers when combined add a sense of depth and realism

3D or not 3D

With any scene that features depth, creating realistic looking objects is vitally important. The problem with 2D image design is exactly that – it's 2D and therefore flat. Giving your image elements a 3D feel is extremely important if the finished piece is to look realistic. So how do you go about making 2D objects look 3D?

There are several ways to add a 3D feel to an image and while most paint packages can wrap, distort and stretch brushes in all directions, it is probably better to add the effect by hand. One way is to add transitional colours much like anti-aliasing. If you take a look at the road bridge and building entrance you will notice they have a 3D curved effect. The trick is to understand which parts are light and which are dark – the road bridge base, for example, starts as a light brown but as we move to the underneath it changes to a dark brown, indicating shadow and therefore creating a 3D feel.

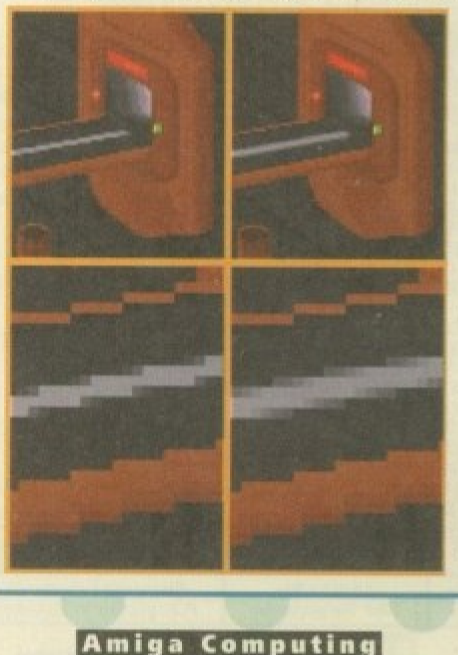
The same effect has been applied to the actual building entrance. If no shadow effect was visible the entrance would look flat and dull but because I have darkened the near side edge it actually looks like a structure jutting out from the main building. The addition of a shadow cast by the road bridge onto the structure enhances the effect even greater.

On a larger scale, you can emulate a 3D feel to your entire design by making the foreground detail sharper than the background detail. An excellent way to achieve this is to use your paint package's Smooth effect. Use the filled rectangle tool with the Smooth tool switched on and drag a box across your background image. Any area covered by the box will be 'smoothed' creating a blurred effect. Combine this technique with the one described above and you should be able to create realistic 3D looking images in no time at all.

Unfortunately, that's all I have time for this month but in the next issue I will be explaining how you can add special effects to your finished artwork.

Anti-aliasing in action

Sometimes, anti-aliasing doesn't always create the effect you want. If this is the case you can simply emulate the effect yourself by adding colour spreads between the two objects you are aliasing together. You can see this effect in action in the screenshots shown.



The white strip along the road bridge is drawn using the line tool and then filled. To smooth its appearance with the road, two transition colours have been added to the edges of each step that make up the strip. Whether added by hand or by your paint package, the end result is extremely effective.

In this picture you can see the aliasing affect. The two left images have no aliasing while the two right images have aliasing added by hand

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TechnoSound Turbo 2 Pro



Paul Overaa checks out the latest upgrade to this popular sampling package

As we might expect, quite a few Amiga hardware and software companies have been working hard during the last few months in order to get new products out as Amiga Technologies bring their new machines into the shops. On the music front, New Dimensions, for example, brought out an updated 'Pro' version of their popular TechnoSound Turbo 2 sampler and, since I've had the chance to play around with this package for quite a few weeks now, I thought it was time to fill you in on some details!

The first thing you'll notice is that the program's display layout has been re-styled to make it easier to use. The software itself is as comprehensive as ever and as well as the main range of digitizing, sample editing and manipulation functions, there's a 'ramscan' option for grabbing samples directly from memory, and 'edit list' arrangements for maintaining sets of samples in memory for immediate use. Of course, the integral sequencer and tracker facilities are still there too, as is the useful Midi module which enables samples to be triggered using a Midi keyboard or external sequencer.

One improvement is the move to 12-bit sample processing on many internal routines. Although this reduces potential quality loss when manipulating 8-bit samples, the main reason for the higher accuracy routines is to allow the software to be used with New Dimension's own 12-bit sampler.

Hardware-wise, the new sampler unit looks pretty much like the 8-bit version except for an extra lead and connector – needed because the unit attaches to both the parallel and serial ports (the serial port connector has a built in thru-port to allow other serial devices to be connected while the device is in use). The 12-bit sampler does provide a noticeable improvement in sample quality but it's performance in terms of sampling rates will, of course, be affected by the processing speed of the Amiga being used. The maximum mono sampling rate for a standard 68000 machine, for example, is 30576 Hz – on a 68020 machine it is 49000 Hz (with stereo rates being approximately half of these figures).



New Dimension's latest 12-bit sampling cartridge

It ought to be pointed out at this stage that not all processing carried out by the new software is being performed using 12-bit calculations. You've still got 8-bit direct to hard disk recording, and real time effects like phasing, echo, delay and the special Funtime 'novelty' effects (eg Pinky & Perky, Dalek and so on) are also performed in 8-bit mode. So too are the tracker, sequencer and Midi module functions.

Digital filtering

The Pro version now boasts some very powerful digital filtering routines and a facility for editing individual channels. Digital filtering essentially means applying certain mathematical transformations to the digitized waveform – you can, for example, use a low pass filter effect to remove unwanted hiss from a sample. TechnoSound Turbo can apply low pass, high pass, and band pass filtering using either the Butterworth or Chebyshev filter equations. You can view frequency response graphs that show predicted amplitude attenuation and even get a display called a Z-Transfer plot.

Now all this, unless you are actively involved in the world of digital signal processing techniques, is likely to sound a little high powered (the theory behind it certainly is). I found that the best thing to do in practice was to just experiment with the various settings, and in this respect the digital filter arrangements do seem quite impressive. In the main, however, I still believe that it's far better to concentrate on getting a good quality sample in the first place than to rely on digital filtering to improve things!

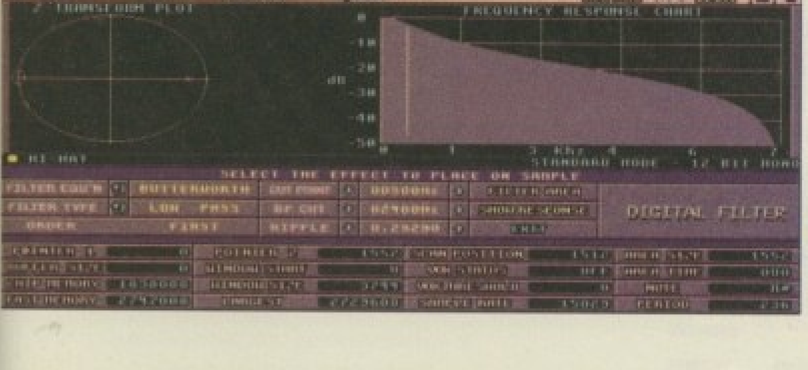
Putting it on the line

The TechnoSound Turbo Pro 2 software alone, with its new higher-resolution internal routines, makes an excellent basis for 8-bit sampling and, in fact, the new software is being bundled with 8-bit hardware for users who just want an up-to-date 8-bit Amiga sampling package. Better still – existing TechnoSound Turbo users are, for a modest fee, able to upgrade just their software and this is clearly a worthwhile pathway for existing users to follow. Those who want to go the whole hog will, of course, need to also buy the additional hardware in order to get 12-bit sample recording capability.

Although the new TechnoSound Turbo Pro 2 can't sample directly to disk in 12-bit mode, it does have advantages in other areas, namely that you do not need a PCMCIA port and this of course makes the package accessible to a wider range of people (A500 users for example) than, say, HiSoft's 12-bit Aura package.



TechnoSound Turbo's new display layout arrangements are an improvement on earlier software



TechnoSound Turbo – now with digital filtering!

The bottom line

Product: TechnoSound Turbo 2 Pro
Price: New TT2 Pro software with 8-bit hardware £39.99
Software upgrade for existing TechnoSound Turbo users £10
12-bit hardware costs an additional £39.99
Supplier: New Dimensions
Tel: 01291 690933

Ease of use	**8**
Implementation	**9**
Value for money	**8**
Overall	**8**

Navigation way

Phil South takes a break from emulating arcade game routines to show you around a few Amos Internet sites

It's amazing isn't it? One minute you don't know what a Web is, next minute you're stuck in one and a spider is sitting next to you putting on his bib. The Internet is a big place and if it wasn't for the likes of me trawling around it in my guise as the Amiga Computing Comms columnist, people wouldn't know that, for example, there is a lot of Amos Action out there. Oh yes, we know about this whole CIX Amos conference, and good as it is, it can't compete with the whole wide world of the Web.

The first port of call should always be Aminet because not only has it got a large collection of Amos programs for you to download, it also has a huge range of other Amiga utils for you to snag. Primarily though, there are at least three sites on the Web which specialise in Amos, and if you have a Web account then this would be a good time to navigate to them and check them out.

Amos Playfield
http://www.gate.net/amos/play/

Although this site is run by enthusiasts, these are no ordinary enthusiasts. They produce the PLAYFIELD newsletter, one of the few remaining paper-based Amos life forms. The site is maintained by Ryan Scott (rscott@gate.net), Paul Hickman (ph@doc.ic.ac.uk), and Andy Church (achurch@goober.mbhs.edu). As well as information about Amos and PLAYFIELD! magazine, there is a 'What's new in the scene?' page for news and views. (At the time of going to press this was under construction, so I have no idea what it looks like!) There is also the Amos People page, which gives you e-mail and Web page links to Amos folks like Andy Church (see the other Amos site), Gareth Edwards, Nigel Harding, Christer Johansson, Seumas McNally, Ben Marty, Hugo Ramses, Moreno, Dominic Ramsey and Paul Reece.

The site also contains programming information, and commercial & PD software for downloading. There are also links to other Amiga/Amos pages like:

Productions Home Page – Commodore Amiga Information Resource, maintained by Michael Witbrock.

Aminet home page – ARexx Home Page, maintained by Robin Evans.

Additionally there is a link to Amos City, but we'll go into that in a minute. There is also extensive coverage of the Amos Mailing List, run by Michael Cox. If you are not a member and have an e-mail account, you can joining by mailing a message with the text:

```
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Unsubscribe messages should go to the same address, not to the list itself. You may post an article to the list by mailing it to: **amos-list@access.digex.net**

You do not have to join the list to mail to it, but if you have not joined make it clear that you wish replies to be e-mailed to you, instead of being posted to the list. There is also a FAQ available for the Amos mailing list at: http://www.gate.net/amos/play/mailinglist/ListFAQ.txt

All in all this is a good site, and if you want to stay in touch with the core of the Amos community, this is the place to be. Unless of course you want to go to:

Amos City
http://www.cee.hw.ac.uk/~ceebdb/amos/

An extensive web site containing 'what you need to know about Amos on the Internet.' It has the necessary links to help you around. Also featured here are some helpful Amos files, from Bob banks to the Latest Amos extensions. Check out the Amos Projects page to see if anyone is working on anything similar to you. You can find this page at:
http://www.cee.hw.ac.uk/~ceebdb/amos/amosproj.html

You can also download Ben Marty's programs: AmosFont, Rotate, Sprite View, Capitals, Scroller, Guru and Stars, and there is a direct link to the Aminet section on Amos. You can also download the extensions Easylife, JD Lib, Ldos, Lserial, and Stars.

This is a very nicely laid out site, and unlike the Playfield site which has a few broken links, all the buttons on this site go somewhere.

The Amos Web Site
http://mmm.mbhs.edu/~achurch/amos/

Finally a little site. This first one is a good source for Amos information and products. Although it is basically a home page with some Amos stuff on it, it is actually very good. Andy Church turns up on the Amos mailing list quite a lot, and is also featured on the other two sites on this page.

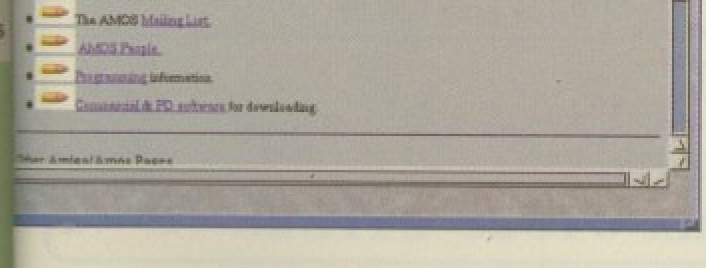
If you'd like your own web site so that you can feature your own Amos programs, why not contact Web Wizards at ifanet@cityscape.co.uk for a quote?

● Next month – more code for your arcade game headaches. See you then.

Write stuff

If you have any other Amos programs or queries about Amos, then please write to the usual address, which is: Phil South, Amos Column, Amiga Computing, Media House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield SK10 4NP. Please send routines on an Amiga disk with notes on how the program works on paper, not as text files on the disk. Make the routines short enough to appear in print, i.e. no more than about 30-40 lines of code, and if possible make them use no external graphics, or if they can't be used without them then be sure to provide them on the disk in native IFF format – the same goes for sound files. Follow these guidelines and you'll make an old man very happy, rather than a happy man very old.







Reverse communications

Paul Overaa illustrates how to write ARexx scripts that can receive messages from external programs

Most Amiga users are aware that ARexx scripts can communicate with other programs by transmitting external commands to the currently logged in ARexx 'host'. But did you know that a script can act as a receiving station for ARexx commands sent by other programs? Best of all, it's surprisingly easy to do because the rexxsupport library provides a whole range of functions that handle all the hard work. The main thing that is needed is an appreciation of the basic message handling framework and, needless to say, this is what this month's instalment is all about.

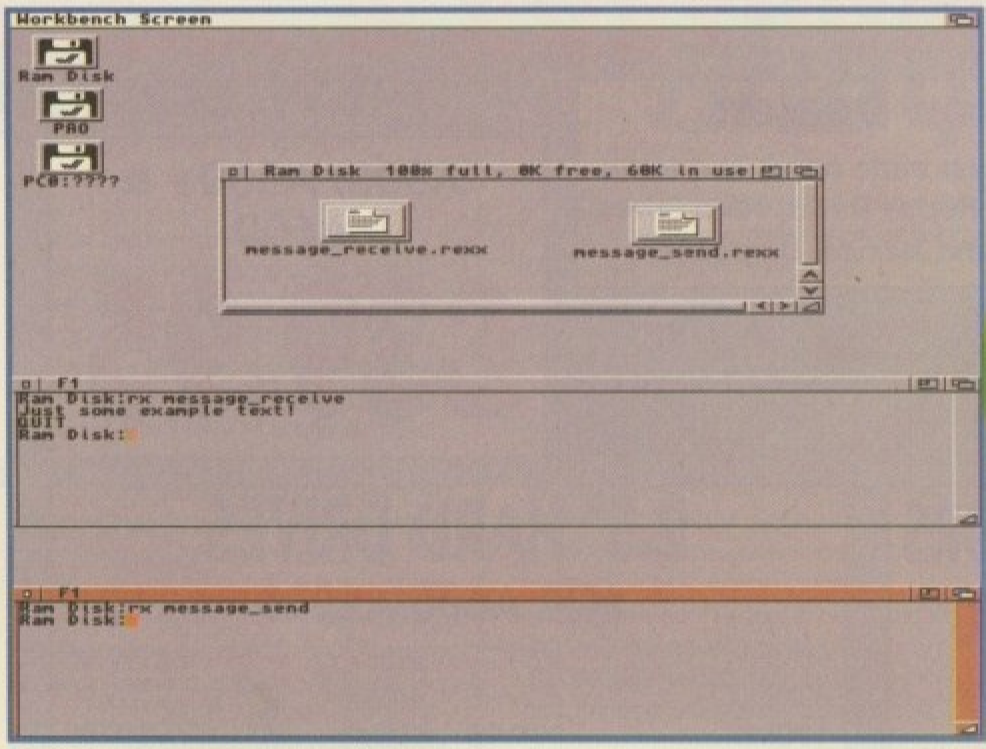
For a script to act as a receiving station for messages, it must have an ARexx port available. This can be created by making a call to the rexxsupport library's OpenPort() function and, providing this call is successful (indicated by a non-NULL return value), the main communications scenario can then begin. Message collection starts with a call to a WaitPkt() (wait for message packet) function which puts the script to sleep until something of interest happens, namely the arrival of a message from another program.

As soon as a message packet appears at the message port, WaitPkt() returns and the address of this message can then be obtained via a call to a GetPkt() function. In most cases this will indeed provide the address of a real message but, because there are occasions where the function can fail, it is safest to check that the returned address is not zero.

Providing all is well the text associated with the message (which will be the real data sent by the external program) can be extracted. The function which does this is called GetArg() and just requires the address of the message packet and a parameter number which, when dealing with simple commands, will always be zero. Once the text has been extracted from the message, the program which sent the message needs to be told that the block of memory associated it is no longer required. This is done by executing the support library's Reply() function.

The basic scenario then goes like this: We set up an ARexx communications port and then wait for a message to arrive. When this happens we collect the message, extract the data, and then indicate that we no longer need access to the message by replying it. Normally programs use a loop, often called an 'event handling' loop, to carry out these sort of operations, and a typical piece of event handling code is shown in listing one.

In this fragment, which comes from one of the examples you'll find on disk, I'm just printing the contents of each message as it arrives and quitting the loop as soon as a 'QUIT' string is detected. Notice, incidentally, how I use the ARexx ~ operator to invert the state of the exit_flag variable, thus creating a loop which is only performed as long as the exit flag is not set!



This is the sort of output you'll see when you run this month's examples



```
do while ~exit_flag
call WaitPkt(PORT)
msg=GetPkt(PORT)
if msg~=NULL then do
          message$=GetArg(msg,0)
          call Reply(msg,0)
          say message$
          if message$='QUIT' then
exit_flag=TRUE
          end
end
```

Listing 1: A typical event handling loop for receiving ARexx messages

```
/* message_send.rexx */
address 'myport'
'Just some example text!'
'QUIT'
```

Listing 2: A simple script used to transmit some example messages

Some runnable code

The easiest way to come to terms with all these ideas is to look at the two examples on disk and run them. To do this copy both the message_receive.rexx and the message_send.rexx scripts to ram: and open two Shell windows setting the current directories of both windows to ram: Now type:

```
rx message_receive
```

at one of the Shell windows. You'll find that nothing appears to happen, but in reality the script is just sitting there waiting for some other program to send it a message. If you now switch to the other Shell window and type:

```
rx message_send
```

you'll see this text appear at the first Shell window:

```
Just some example text!
QUIT
```

Additionally, the message_receive.rexx script will then terminate and the normal Shell prompt will reappear. You'll see why this happens by looking at listing 2 which is the complete message_send.rexx script.

This program starts by using the Address command to set the current host to 'myport', which is the ARexx port that was opened by the message_receive.rexx script. The other two lines in listing 2 are just text strings which, because they mean nothing to ARexx itself, get classified as being commands intended for an external program and are transmitted to the current host - namely the message_receive.rexx script!

There's not a lot of point in going into a lot of detail about how the various rexxsupport library functions work beneath the surface (the explanations are in fact quite complicated). You'll appreciate the overall ideas far more easily by just examining the code and seeing it in action.

The thing to do with this month's examples then is to play around with them, modify the text messages that are sent, and generally get a feel for what's going on. Once you've understood the overall framework of the example event handling loop, you should be able to create similar loops in your own scripts relatively easily!

Information Superhighway ahoy

Phil South sees the new plans from the Labour Party and BT as a welcome step in the right direction



I was intrigued last month when, at the Labour Party's annual conference, leader Tony Blair uncovered the plans for BT's new fibre optic-based branch of the Information Superhighway, and it's plans to send entertainment broadcasts down the pipe as well as phone calls. This opened a veritable tin of worms at the time, and the argument still rages today, albeit at a slightly lower level. In other words people are still muttering about it.

It was a good plan though, and I thought it had promise. Firstly, it means that when Labour get in at the next election (no other outcome seems more likely at this time, despite the Conservative posturing at their own conference) we will be charging ahead into the information age with the rest of Europe, and not lagging behind. Secondly, all the restrictions, or at least some of the more important ones, will be lifted from BT and give us the kind of communications system in this country which I've been banging on about for months. No, it's years, because the phrase Information Superhighway was first bandied about around four to five years ago.

Not least of the new benefits will be that schools can finally throw off the shackles of the Acorn machine with which they have been saddled since the early '80s and access the new network using tools of their choosing, namely those nice cheap new A1200s which are supposed to be flooding the market, perhaps? And why not. An A1200 has most of the things that you would need to access a multimedia network, has it not? Sound, and graphics on a par with PCs, and a keyboard and a serial port too. And all for £300. But mostly it means that our country will have a say in what goes into the global version of the Information Superhighway, which in many ways is the point.

What happens if the Information Superhighway is developed by the US and Europe without our input? Does this mean we'll have a repeat performance of the Internet, Compuserve, eWorld and Delphi, where most of the content is so US-centric as to be of low interest to a UK user? The answer is that we must not lag behind again.

I say again because there was a time when the UK led the world in computer technology and communications. All the leading developments in computers up until the '80s were made in the UK, and we were one of the first countries in the world to have a thriving communications community, what with the rise of BBSs in the '80s on platforms such as the Spectrum and late lamented Commodore 64. What happened? We still have a high level of take-up of the Internet and its services. We have a large Internet community and a large number of businesses taking notice of the Internet. But we seem to have little interest in the UK being a place where innovations are made.

It's time this group of old school ties we have in power at the present time got wind of the fact that we need an information policy and we need it now, not next week. Perhaps they could take time off from giving huge pay rises to their chums in industry and put a little thought and money into making the UK a place where people from all over the world come to buy information resources, web space and, more importantly, services from skilled computer people. We used to be the best at this, and now we are struggling to keep up. The message is simple: time for change of policy or time for a change of government.

That was a party political broadcast on the behalf of the Sick and Tired of Waiting for the Information Superhighway Party.

Bookmarks

The Labour Party
http://www.poptel.org.uk/Labour-Party/
For more info on enlightened information policy, check out Labour's on-line office.

The HUB Internet Cafe
http://www.rednet.co.uk:80/intercafe/
Just down the road from me in Bath, Avon, the Net café with the best java and the coolest looking site.

CIX Internet
http://www.compulink.co.uk/
CIX, after years of being the best BBS with the coolest Internet access, is now a fully fledged Internet service provider. Check out the pages to find out more.

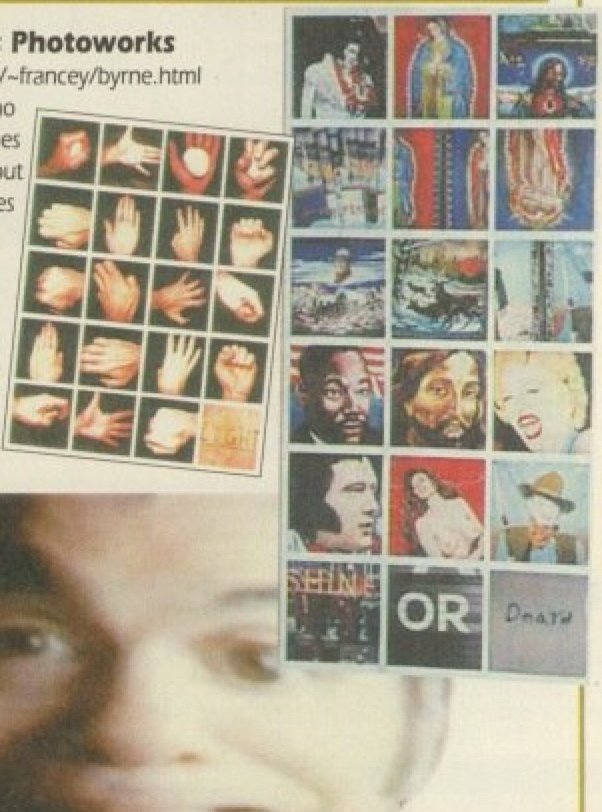
UK Online
http://www.ukonline.co.uk/
New kid on the block. UK Online offers everything you'll get from Compuserve and friends, but full Net access right off the bat.

Easynet
http://www.easynet.co.uk/
Nice and cheap, plus web sites for sale, own domain names, and a bunch of other services. Cool name, too.

Fringeware Review On-line Catalogue
http://www.fringeware.com/
The most bonkers source of crazy stuff to buy over the Web. UFO playing cards are just the half of it.

Amiga Report
http://www.omnipresence.com/Amiga/News/AR/MainPage.html
The latest news about Amiga and all who sail in her.

David Byrne's Photoworks
http://www.bart.nl/~francey/byrne.html
Talking Heads are no more, but Byrne goes on and on. Check out Crazy Dave's pictures on the Web.





The largest and most highly praised collection of high quality DTP & DTV PD & Shareware in AMIGA history!

We have seen almost every Amiga CD title in existence and sadly, the general trend appears to be "shovel as much data on as possible and to hell with the quality". The majority of these CDs are also developed as multi-platform CDs and while this may be advantageous for the company selling them, the end user is faced with a CD containing a high proportion of files that he probably can't even use. So what is left? A CD containing loads of badly organised directories filled with low quality (in some cases even pathetic) graphics. Being a little disappointed, the user then looks in the font directories and finds... a massive task on his hands... he has hundreds of fonts (that are probably duplicated many times) and no way of knowing what he's got! The poor end user is then literally forced into loading each individual font into an application, just to see what fonts he's actually got! If that wasn't bad enough, he then, quite possibly, discovers that most of the fonts have missing and/or corrupt files!

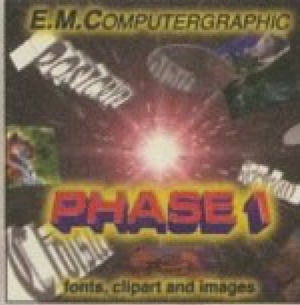
Some of these "so called" CD developers even get away with "shovelling" data from their old CDs onto new ones and releasing the new CD as "Professional". We could go on and on and on, but why bore you with something you already know? We genuinely feel that the current situation stinks and we at EMC are aiming to set the standard on which all data CDs on the Amiga will be judged. A big claim you say? Well, here's a brief insight to what is included on the EMC CDs and how the data is organised...

Firstly, these CDs are aimed directly at Amiga users, and are not designed for multi-platform computer use. This means that you don't get CDs loaded with PC files that you cannot use! To aid in the rapid location of font, clipart and image data, each of the 3 CDs contains IFF font preview screens for every font (regardless of its format), you simply click on the preview icon to see the font! The clipart and image directories have been fully sorted and all directories include full IFF preview thumbnail index screens (and also descriptive filenames). Purchasers of the CDs will also have the option to buy a typeface book, published especially for the EMC CDs, containing font printouts!

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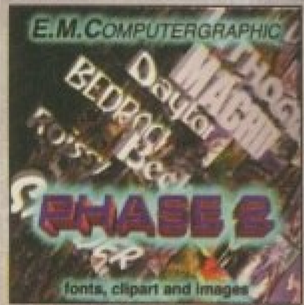
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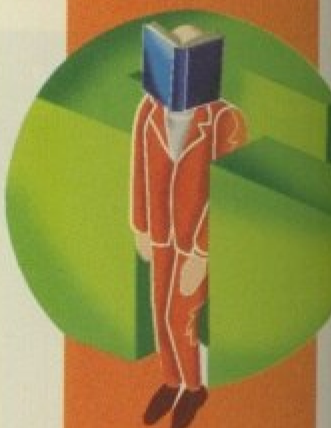
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It's all in the presentation



Frank Nord takes apart commercial packaging design for a few ideas

If you are ever lucky enough to get a job doing DTP full-time, you might be unlucky enough to get pushed into packaging design. I say unlucky because unless you are working for a small company with a continuous stream of new products to package, you will probably be working for an established firm with concrete ideas on how they want their products to look and a corporate identity to maintain.

Packaging design is one of the most ubiquitous forms of design work, and the one taken most for granted. Supermarket chains work long and hard making sure that packaging is just right, often spending many thousands of pounds to get the effect they want on a product that might only cost 29p. As such, packaging design should be a constant source of inspiration to budding DTPers out there. When you next go into your local supermarket, notice how all the supermarket's own brand products have a consistent look to them. The logo is always in an important but discrete location on the packaging – the supermarket want you to buy tesco **MILK**, not **TESCO** milk – and the packaging is also usually slightly less grand than a brand name product.

MANYFOLD

The reasons for this are manyfold, but two of the most important are the fact that a) the supermarket don't want to grandstand the brand and b) if you pick up the supermarket's own brand, you might think it a cheaper product (which it often is) and buy it. This pleases the supermarkets no end because they make more profit on their own branded goods than on a brand name item. The design is a subtle form of reverse psychology in this instance.

So here's an example of real-life packaging. While not overly impressive in the originality stakes, the design does show up some of the necessities of a supermarket-branded product.

The first thing to note is the generic product name. When I was a kid, Jelly Buttons were always called 'spogs.' While you might not know them by that name, I'm sure that Bertram Bassett Esq. has a more edifying name for them than merely 'Jelly Buttons.' However, Sainsburys are definitely not Bertie Bassett, so whatever name has been dreamed up for them by Bertie's marketing men, it can't be used by Sainsburys.

The milk bottles have always really had a generic name, a bit like baked beans, so the recognition factor is high already. Both designs are simple and uncluttered, using as few colours as possible – three for the spogs and only two for the milk bottles. Notice, also, the window in both packets allowing the possible purchaser to have a closer look at the merchandise on offer. This is a very important factor with food products in today's highly processed, highly packaged society. Even packages that are completely opaque will quite often be openable to allow for a peer inside at the contents.



As a last resort, the supermarket will always put a picture of the product, quite often in combination with other, more expensive items, on the packaging in a 'serving suggestion'.

I know this article must seem like a waste of time to the amateur DTP enthusiast, the issues involved bearing little relevance for the man in the street, but it all highlights how involved a process DTP and design actually is.

Casual effects

The reason I used two such seemingly boring package designs is to accentuate the actual work that goes into making attractive and effective products. Note the vertical stripes at the top and bottom of each packet, drawing the eye to the middle where the window is. The typography used on each is actually fairly irrelevant to the design and even a bit puzzling for the spogs. The milk bottles text would have worked just as well if it was in a chalk-on-a-blackboard typeface or something like AdLib.

The typeface for the spogs seems to be suggesting something a bit classier than just sweets. You might imagine Sainsburys using this particular font for after-dinner mints or something similar. The duller packaging also suggests that perhaps the target audience for the sweets is somewhat older than for the milk bottles – perhaps spogs don't appeal to six-year olds (they did to me when I was that age).

Turning to the back of the packets, notice how, although similar, the elements are not identical. Part of this has to do with one aspect of the scanned packets that you won't be able to appreciate – the different materials. The milk bottle packet is made of a glossier, slightly thicker plastic than the spog bag, and I would think that the printing method is different too. The thicker lines, simpler design, and bolder fonts on the spog bag lead me to believe that it has probably been printed using a process akin to screen printing, while the milk bottle packet looks more like a traditional offset litho process – I'm not sure, because I have never dealt with commercial printing onto plastics.

Anyway, make sure you have a good hard look at the products you buy the next time you are in a supermarket – it might surprise you how much you miss. Next month, I'm going to continue with the commercial side of things and take a look at copyright law.

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Fonts and video PART 2



Gary Whiteley expands on last month's look at fonts and video

Last month I mentioned the various font types available on the Amiga and how to convert them into formats suitable for use with video and graphics programs, if necessary. This month I want to look at the various styles of font available and give you some pointers as to how best to use them in your graphics and video applications, and also some indications of areas to avoid when using fonts for video output.

Broadly speaking, fonts can be divided into two main groupings – Serif and Sanserif. Serif fonts have extensions on the end of the main strokes and hair lines of their letters, whereas Sanserif fonts are simply plain letters with no serif embellishments. Whether you use Serif or Sanserif fonts in your video productions is obviously a matter of personal taste. I tend to use Sanserif fonts in circumstances where information needs to be quickly and simply presented, such as scrolling video titles, lists and captions, and Serif fonts when I want my data to have a little more 'class' and to be more in keeping with the subject matter it is being used for.

Naturally, there are other forms within these two broad categories, such as script-style fonts and those which emulate typewriter lettering, for example, although the former might still be Sanserif and the latter Serif. Script fonts give a more natural, personalised handwriting feel, whereas a typewriter style might imply fast-breaking news being teletyped onto the screen, or give the impression of a secret document.

FUTURISTIC

I also mentioned Colorfonts last month. Their advantage is, that while they still remain within the Serif/Sanserif groupings, they can use more than one colour to evoke extra meaning – for instance, by having a futuristic chrome look, or mimic naturally occurring materials such as gold, granite or marble, which can be useful if you need a particular feel to your graphics or video text.

Obviously, the context of your images is important when you are choosing fonts. If you're titling a period drama then you should try to choose a font which is sympathetic to the date in which the drama is set. A Victorian epic is unlikely to benefit from the use of hi-tech digital lettering, nor is a flowing gothic script likely to complement a nature documentary. These things should really be common sense, but I have seen people make some weird font choices at times and wondered if they had really considered just why they were using them, apart from the fact that they had them handy and they liked them.

So it's always important to weigh the pros and cons of taking the easy way out and making a compromise just because you're feeling lazy, or running through a short-list selection of fonts and making your choice after due consideration for the style and setting of the graphic or video you are working on.



Most typefaces fall into two main headings – Serif and Sanserif. Watch out for thin lines and edges though, as typefaces such as those enclosed in the box may not always genlock well over video

Next month

Yet more on the use of fonts for video and graphics.

You can e-mail Gary Whiteley as drgaz@cix.compulink.co.uk

Legibility

Another important consideration is the size of the lettering you use, since not only does size impart a degree of importance to the text, but it can also make the difference between visibility and invisibility. There's no need to go size-crazy and make all your text as large as possible (unless a particular project calls for it of course) but there's equally no point in making it so small as to be illegible. Watch out for thin lines in fonts too, as they may either jitter or simply disappear if you are genlocking your graphics over video. As a quick test to see if your text is going to hit the spot, step back from your monitor perhaps ten or twelve feet and see if you can read it from this more normal TV viewing distance. If you can't, choose a larger size.

This is where CGFonts come into their own, since they are not limited to particular fixed sizes, like bitmap fonts are. Unfortunately, there aren't many Amiga video titlers which can use CGFonts directly (though more advanced versions of Scala can) but most current graphics packages are quite happy with CGFonts, so if you need to preview sizes you can always use a suitable paint program and then make bitmap versions of particular CGFonts to use with your titling software (so long as your titler permits you to use external fonts, that is).

In fact, once you've established your favourite CGFonts and experimented with a range of useful sizes, it can be very useful to make a library of bitmap fonts and use these instead, because this is basically what is happening when you change the size of a CGFont on the fly and have to wait while a new screen font is produced before you see it on the screen.

If you don't have a particularly fast Amiga then making bitmap equivalents of CGFonts can be crucial, because your Amiga might not be able to keep up if it is having to do lots of rescaling during a title sequence, for instance. Bitmap fonts will simply load and display as you require them (unless they are very large) and your presentations will run much more smoothly as a result.

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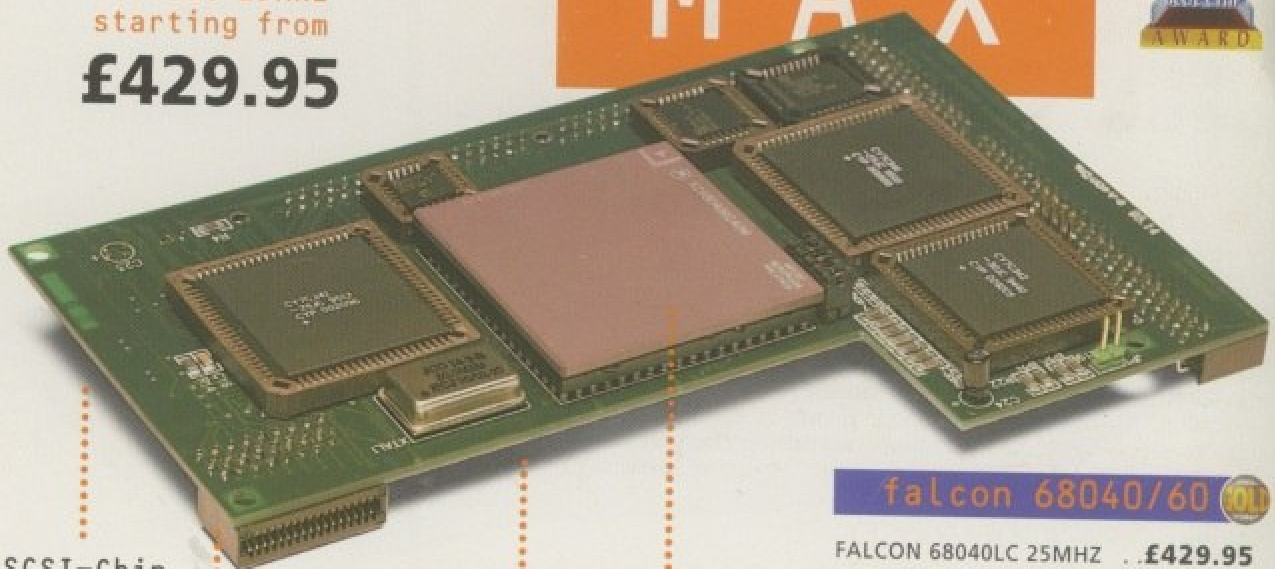
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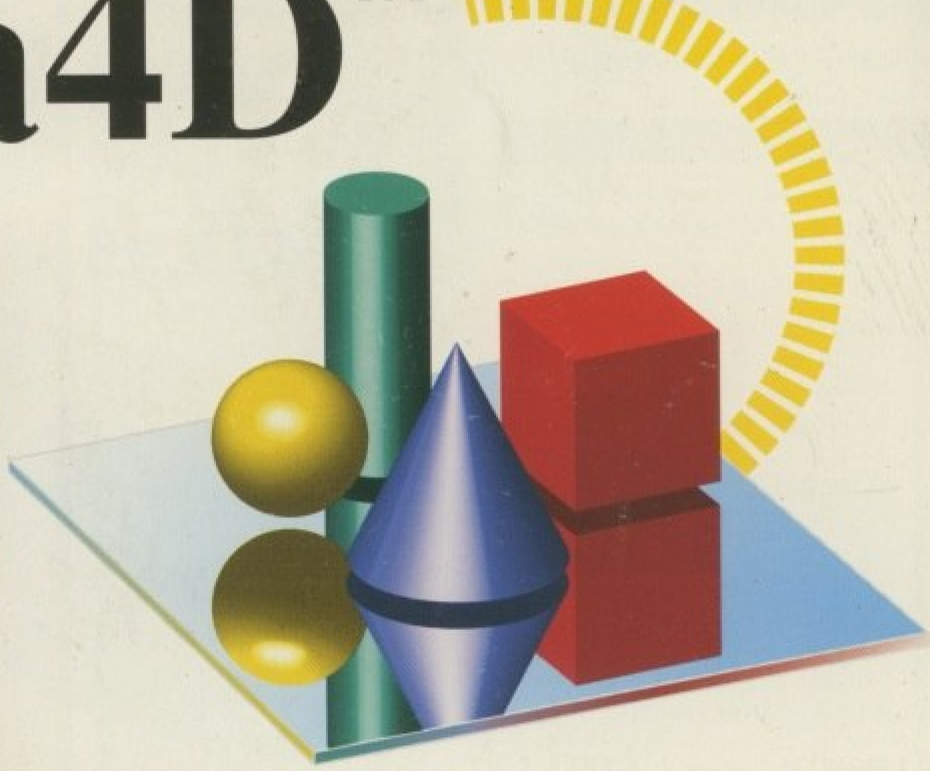
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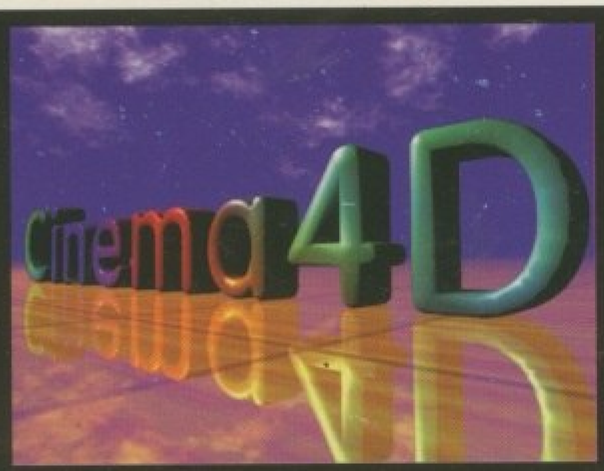
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